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# ERAS OF NONCONFORMITY

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National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches.  
London: Geo. S. Hirst, Memorial Hall, E.C.

ERAS OF NONCONFORMITY

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THE RISE OF THE QUAKERS



# THE RISE OF THE QUAKERS

BY

T. EDMUND HARVEY

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES

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**SIXTH IMPRESSION**

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## Preface to the Sixth Impression

SINCE the publication of this book in 1905 several important volumes have appeared which cast new light on the early history of Quakerism, and the reader would do well to make use of them in making a more detailed study of the subject.

In 1907 the Friends' Historical Society of London issued in volume form *The First Publishers of Truth*, under which title the Yearly Meeting had gathered together, between the years 1676 and 1720, records of the introduction of Quakerism in the various districts of England and Wales. They give much detailed information, and show how large a part was taken by a group of young men in the spread of the new movement which had as its most active centre the North-West of England, and especially Westmoreland, Furness, and Cumberland.

In 1911 came the Cambridge edition of the *Journal of George Fox*, making for the first time available to all but a few scholars the original manuscript, which differs, both by omissions and additions of importance, from the *Journal* as edited by Thomas Ellwood. Both these works were edited by Norman Penney, whose historical notes are of great value.

In 1913 appeared Helen G. Crosfield's biography of Margaret Fox, containing extracts from material previously unpublished, and in 1919 A. N. Brayshaw's *The Personality of George Fox*, containing matter of much interest, while in 1921 the same writer's *The Quakers: their Story and Message*, brought the history of Quakerism down to the year of publication, giving details of value based on much original research. But apart from such a prime source as *Fox's Journal*,<sup>1</sup> the most important publication for the student of the period is to be found in Wm. C. Braithwaite's two masterly volumes, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (1912) and *The Second Period of Quakerism* (1919), to each of which introductions have been contributed by Rufus M. Jones, casting valuable light on the whole subject. The two works give a unique insight into the history of the creative and formative periods of Quakerism.

T. EDMUND HARVEY.

LEEDS, December 11, 1921.

<sup>1</sup> The original Manuscript *Journal*, together with a complementary volume of early Quaker correspondence from the collection at Swarthmore Hall, is now in the Friends' Reference Library at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate.

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*The original spelling of the quotations has been usually modernised, and in one case a grammatical correction has been made—T. E. H.*

# I

## *INTRODUCTORY*

THE rise of the Society of Friends is so closely bound up with the story of the life of George Fox that it is hardly possible to write of one without treating of the other. And yet no one would have been prompter than George Fox himself to disclaim the position which we might so naturally give him as founder of the Society of Friends. For, indeed, the history of the early Quakers is not that of a man, but of a movement. Before Fox began to preach men were feeling after the truths which he proclaimed; not only were doctrines afterwards distinctive of Quakerism held here and there by one and another of the many religious bodies which perplex the ecclesiastical historian of the seventeenth century, but up and down England little companies of "Seekers," as they called themselves, were accustomed to meet together to search after fuller knowledge of the truth, and often



to wait in silence before God in faith that He would teach them, though all the preachers of the different Churches without had failed to do so. Thus in the brief narrative of the spreading of truth inserted by George Fox in his Journal for the year 1676<sup>1</sup> he is able to speak of the gathering together of Friends as a people in Leicestershire as early as 1644, though his own work as a preacher is not usually accounted to have begun till 1647. In his Journal for this period he speaks of talking with "friendly people" who would doubtless be Seekers or in sympathy with them—men and women weary of the formalism of the Puritans, tired of the endless theological subtleties of so many of their preachers, longing in their hearts for a religion which should touch not only their intellects, but their inmost souls.

It is difficult for us to-day to picture the conditions of life in England when George Fox began his great work. But we may feel something of the difference from our own time in reading John Bunyan's story of his own life in "Grace Abounding." One is struck with the way in which the paramount interest of everyday men and women lies in religion; poor women in the street talk about

<sup>1</sup> Journal, vol. ii. p. 251.

sin and salvation ; the simple Bedfordshire tinker is haunted by the horror of his own wickedness and the dread of hell, and the innocent art of bell-ringing becomes to him the subtlest snare of the Evil One. The religious experiences of Fox and Bunyan only show more clearly and in greater measure what a thousand other souls about them were passing through and striving after. Everywhere men were endeavouring to arrive at better forms of worship and Church government, aiming at lives purer from ill, secretly longing for a deeper and more living faith. The great majority of the band of Quaker preachers who, within a few years of the time when Fox began his public ministry, went about the country in the same service of truth, had passed through many phases of belief before they found rest and a new life in the gospel of the universal and saving Light.

It is noteworthy, too, that the men who were the instruments of this great religious movement were in most cases far below the opponents against whom they found themselves pitted, in intellectual equipment as well as social position. Despite the keen ability to seize an advantage of argument, and the strong mother-wit which George Fox's Journal

so often reveals, the victories of the early Quakers were not won by force of argument. Their constant appeal was to the witness of God in the souls of their hearers, and their endeavour was to arouse that in the listeners' hearts which would in time bring conviction to them. And sometimes it was a power beyond the expression of words which made itself felt on those who came into contact with them, and kindled a like response within them. None, perhaps, have written more beautifully of this than Robert Barclay, the scholar trained in the Scottish Jesuit College at Paris, who, as he tells us, "not by strength of arguments or by a particular disquisition of each doctrine and convincement of my understanding thereby, came to receive and bear witness of the truth; but by being secretly reached by this life. For when," he goes on, "I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me, and the good raised up; and so I became thus knit and united to them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life whereby I might feel myself perfectly, redeemed."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Barclay, *Apology*, Proposition xi., "Of Worship."

Such was the convincement the early Quakers sought to bring about. Illustrating this from another standpoint, George Whitehead's autobiography gives a vivid picture of the effect produced on his mind when, as a thoughtful young man in search for some better food than the Presbyterians had been able to give him, he first attended a meeting of the Quakers at Sunny Bank, near Grayrigg, in Westmoreland.

"At my first going to the said Meeting, what was most observable to me was when I came into the said Meeting and sate down seriously among them, after a little space of silence, a Friend (one Thomas Arey) spoke a little while of the spiritual deliverance, travels and progress of the Lord's people in His way and work; alluding to Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, from under Pharaoh and his taskmasters, &c. . . . All which I thought I easily understood allegorically, or mysteriously, as spiritualised; but there appeared to me a great work of the power of the Lord in the Meeting, breaking of the hearts of divers into great sorrow, weeping and contrition of spirit, which I believe was a godly sorrow for sin, in order to unfeigned repentance.

"I was the more confirmed herein, seeing a young maid go mourning out of the Meeting,

whom I seriously followed to observe her sorrowful condition, and beholding her being sate down on the ground, with her face down toward the earth, as if she regarded nobody present, she, mourning bitterly, cried out, 'Lord, make me clean ; O Lord, make me clean.' Which did far more tenderly and deeply affect my heart than what I had heard spoken, and more than all the preaching that ever I had heard from man or men ; and was a certain testimony to me, the Spirit of the Lord evidencing to my spirit that it was a real work of His power upon her heart."<sup>1</sup>

This experience of George Whitehead's may well represent to us the way in which the Quaker movement grew. It was not by eloquence of preaching, and often in spite of lack of all the accustomed training of learned study and of practical experience, that this new evangel spread through village and town, from yeomen's farms and country cottages, from merchants' houses and tradesmen's shops, where there assembled together the little groups of men and women, known to each other as the " Friends of Truth " and to those about them as " Quakers." As in the days of the early Church, these gatherings of believers were for the most part held in private houses,

<sup>1</sup> G. Whitehead, *Christian Progress*, pt. i. p.3.

and were far more numerous than at first sight appears. We have no means of judging the numbers of such meetings in the earliest days, but the records of Quarter Sessions show that when under the Toleration Act of 1690 a licence was taken out for such meetings, there were nearly 400 held in Yorkshire alone, many of them in places in which to-day one would not otherwise have known that there had ever been any Quakers. That the ideal Friends' Meeting was felt to be a small rather than a large gathering was shown by the arrangements made in the early days in London by which a number of more or less private meetings were held in Friends' houses attended by those already convinced of the truth of the new views; while Edward Burrough and his fellow-ministers went to the great public meetings in Gracechurch Street or at the "Bull and Mouth," where they were prepared to find an unruly multitude of scoffers, mingled with others more seriously inclined—meetings in which their work was that of threshing out the good wheat from the chaff, and sending on in due time one after another to join the quiet meetings held in private houses. But one can hardly do justice to the history of the early Quakers by plunging thus into the midst of the subject; and

though one needs to realise something of the religious atmosphere that surrounded the movement and made it what it was, it is natural that in telling the story of its rise we should turn to the life of Fox himself.

*THE EARLY LIFE OF GEORGE FOX*

THERE seems to have been little in the family surroundings and early education of George Fox to mark him out from his fellows. He was born in 1624, at Fenny Drayton, in Leicestershire, of simple middle-class parents. His father, Christopher Fox—"righteous Christer," as the neighbours called him—was a weaver by trade, and apparently in sufficiently easy circumstances to allow of his proposing to bring up the quiet, earnest-minded lad with a view to his being ordained in the Church of England; but other counsels prevailed, and he was apprenticed instead to a shoemaker and grazier. George Fox makes but the briefest mention of his father in his Journal, which was written rather as a spiritual history than as a biographical record. We do, however, get one little picture of him



at a later date, standing with his cane in his hand listening to a dispute between the rector, Nathaniel Stephens, and his son, and in spite of his having sided with his parson (whose churchwarden he once had been), recognising that the victory lay with George, and crying out as he struck his cane upon the ground, "Truly I see, he that will but stand to the truth, it will carry him out."<sup>1</sup> Christopher Fox never seems to have become a Quaker, but, as his son wrote, "he was an honest man, and there was a seed of God in him." His mother would seem to have had a deeper influence upon Fox. Mary Lago was, as Penn tells us, "a woman accomplished above most of her degree in the place where she lived,"<sup>2</sup> and was "tender and indulgent" to her son's serious ways, by which he was marked out from his other brothers and sisters. She came, as Fox tells us, "of the stock of the martyrs," and more than one reference which he makes in his writings to the heroes of the persecution in Queen Mary's time shows how deep the impress of their battle for the truth must have been upon his mind. Doubtless he would often hear as a child his mother tell

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 206 (8th edition, 2 vols. 1891. 8vo.).

<sup>2</sup> Penn's Preface to George Fox's Journal, p. xlv.

of the trials of those dark days, and of how her relations had suffered. He would hear of Robert Glover's firm endurance, even when for days before his martyrdom no assurance of Divine support was given him, until at last, as he walked to the stake, he felt about him the Presence for which he longed, and cried joyfully to his friend, "Austen, He is come! He is come!" and the long trials of the brothers John and William Glover—John hunted by the officers and spending nights in hiding in the wet woods; William driven from his native town to die in a Shropshire village; the bodies of both cast forth from churchyard and church and buried with ignominy as damned heretics. The soul of the lad would be stirred within him as he listened, and perhaps in later days the memory of his forefathers and their struggle would nerve him for the persecution he too had to face.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of home and Church were alike Puritan intendency. Nathaniel Stephens, who was appointed to the living in 1640, became a Presbyterian under the Long Parliament, and was ultimately ejected for non-conformity after the Restoration. There

<sup>1</sup> See Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, and Richings, *The Mancetter Martyrs*, 1860; cf. *Dict. Nat. Biography*, article on Fox.

seems to be nothing to show that George Fox ever came into contact in his earlier years with any of the school of Laud and Andrewes, and though as a child he would, no doubt, be familiar with the liturgy of the Prayer Book, the atmosphere in which he grew up was that of the Puritan Church of the Civil War, and the Quaker movement was hardly influenced at all directly by the teaching of the Anglican Church. When, in 1665, George Fox lay in prison in Scarborough Castle, Dr. Cradock, one of the clergy who came to dispute with him, was frankly taxed by the Quaker leader with his inconsistency in excommunicating a number of Friends, "for not coming to church," as the clergyman said. "Why, ye left us above twenty years ago, when we were but young lads and lasses, to the Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, many of whom made spoil of our goods and persecuted us because we would not follow them. Now we, being but young, knew little then of your principles, and if ye had intended to keep the old men that did know them to you, and your principles alive, that we might have known them, ye should either not have fled from us as ye did, or ye should have sent us your epistles, collects, homilies, and evening songs, for Paul wrote epistles to the

saints though he was in prison. But they and we might have turned Turks or Jews for any collects, homilies, or epistles we had from you all this while. And now thou hast excommunicated us, both young and old, and so have others of you done: that is, ye have put us out of your Church, before ye have got us into it."<sup>1</sup>

"When I came to eleven years of age," writes Fox, "I knew pureness and righteousness, for while a child I was taught how to walk to be kept pure,"<sup>2</sup> and while he served his master his truthfulness of speech became a proverb to his neighbours. "If George says Verily, there is no altering him." Though it is possible that he worked enough with his master to be able a little later to make himself<sup>3</sup> that famous suit of leather in which he went on his journeys, and of which Carlyle has so well written, it was chiefly in tending the sheep that his time was employed. And

<sup>1</sup> Journal, ii. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Journal, i. 2; and Penn, Preface, p. liv.

<sup>3</sup> There seems to be no evidence for Fox having made the suit himself. Sewell says he wore it not on account of his former trade, but for convenience in travel, to avoid constant repairs to his clothes. Croese tells of his being known on account of it as 'the Leather Man.'

here in the open air, alone with the flocks, he must often have pondered over the problems of life and religion, and sought after some better solution than his rector was able to give him. The turning-point of his life came, as it has so often done to others, in a seemingly trifling incident. It was in the

1643 summer of 1643 that he had been on business to a fair, and was asked by a cousin to join him and a friend, both of them "professors"—Puritans making profession of their religion—in drinking a jug of beer. George was thirsty, and accepted the invitation, the more readily, as he tells us, because he "loved any that had a sense of good, or that sought after the Lord." After each had drunk a glass, the others began drinking healths, calling for more, and agreeing that he who would not drink should pay for all. Telling the story in his *Journal*, Fox writes: "I was grieved that any who made profession of religion should do so. They grieved me very much, having never had such a thing put to me before by any sort of people; wherefore I rose up to go, and putting my hand into my pocket, laid a groat on the table before them, and said, 'If it be so, I will leave you.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, i. 3.

When he reached home he did not go to bed that night, but walked to and fro, or knelt in prayer, pouring out the trouble of his heart to God.

Common enough it must have been then, as now, to see men drinking themselves drunk in the taverns "for good-fellowship's sake"; what had so touched him must have been the sudden shock of the contrast between the outward appearance and the inward reality. In an instant of time had been made clear to him the sham of this formal religion these men professed; the starched mask of Puritanism fell for a moment and revealed beneath it the features of an evil nature, the passions of earth, concealed, but unsubdued. George Fox realised that religion must go to the roots of being or it was no religion at all. This religion his friends professed was a sham, a failure; and now he felt the voice of God calling him to leave all, young and old alike, and go forth as a stranger, in quest of the Divine Truth.

"Then," he goes on, "at the command of God, on the ninth day of the seventh month, 1643, I left my relations and broke off all familiarity of fellowship with old or young,"<sup>1</sup> and he set out on his travels, journeying from

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 3.

place to place, seeking, but not finding, and sometimes almost in despair.

Troubled at length lest he should grieve his relatives by his absence, he returned from London to Leicestershire. Some of his relations wished him to marry,\* and others would have him enlist in the army; no one seemed in any way to understand his trouble; sometimes the rector would converse with him and encourage him; "Never was such a plant bred in England," he once exclaimed.<sup>1</sup>

But when Stephens began to preach on the young man's talks with him in his sermons in church on Sunday, Fox was not pleased, and he soon turned to other places in hopes of finding better teachers. One tried to cure him with physic; another lost his temper when he trod on a flower-bed; a third kindly old clergyman bade him "take tobacco and

\* Calamy's account of Stephens is of considerable interest, and gives an attractive picture of him in his old age as an ejected Nonconformist. "The noted Quaker, George Fox, came out of his little parish. Mr. Stephens had much discourse with him, but with little effect. He thought his time better spent in instructing a teachable people; which he did very diligently. He took much pains in studying the book of the Revelation; and some apprehended that few ever did it to better purpose" (Calamy, *Nonconformists' Memorial*, vol. ii., ed. 1802).

sing psalms!" "When the time called Christmas came," he writes, "while others were feasting and sporting themselves, I looked out poor widows from house to house, and gave them some money. When I was invited to marriages (as I sometimes was) I went to none at all, but the next day, or soon after, I would go and visit them, and if they were poor, I gave them some money; for I had wherewith both to keep myself from being chargeable to others, and to administer something to the necessities of those who were in need."<sup>1</sup>

At this time the clouds about him lifted; as he was nearing Coventry in 1646, ponder-

**1646** ing the saying that "all Christians are believers, both Protestants and Papists," there came to him the message that to be a Christian meant passing from death to life, and that such alone were in reality believers who had gone through this birth into the true life. A little later another message showed him that "to be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ," at which, he tells us, he wondered, "seeing that it was the common belief of people." Meanwhile his friends were troubled that he

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 7.



preferred to go into an orchard with his Bible alone rather than to hear the clergyman with them in church.

He was already coming to see beyond the ideas in which he had grown up with regard to the holiness of any sacred building. "It was opened to me," he writes, "that God, who made the world, did not dwell in temples made with hands, and this seemed at first a strange word, because both priests and people used to call their temples or churches dreadful places, holy ground, and the temple of God. But the Lord showed me clearly that He did not dwell in these temples which men had commanded and set up, but in people's hearts."<sup>1</sup> Yet these moments of vision alternated with times of great trouble and temptation. "I fasted much," Fox writes, "and walked abroad in solitary places many days, and often took my Bible and went and sat in hollow trees and lonesome places till night came on, and frequently in the night walked mournfully abroad by myself, for I was a man of sorrows in the times of the first workings of the Lord in me."<sup>2</sup>

He had already given up hope of effectual help from the clergy of the National Church, and now he found that none of the preachers

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 8.

<sup>2</sup> i. 10.

of the various sects he came across were able to supply what he needed. And at length, he tells us, "when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, O! then I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy." What he had sought in vain from men he found in the depths of his own heart, in the inward presence of the Spirit of Christ, enlightening his darkness and leading him along the way of truth.

Now the meaning of the truths of the Scriptures began to come home to him as never before; a new hope had entered into his life and a new strength in temptation; "a secret anchor" realised as holding him fast, even when unseen amid the waves. He tells us how at one time he was "wrapped up in the love of God, so that I could not but admire the greatness of His love," and realised that all his troubles and temptations were for his good; that "that which could not abide in the patience nor endure the fire, in the light I found it to be the groans of the flesh, that could not give up to the will of

God, which had veiled me ; and that could not be patient in all trials, troubles, and perplexities, could not give up self to die by the Cross, the power of God. . . ." With the realisation of the two natures at war in the soul of man came also the knowledge of the liberty that comes with the daily crucifixion of the lower self—"If ye join to the Spirit and serve God in it, ye have liberty and victory over the flesh and its works. Therefore keep in the daily cross the power of God, by which you may witness all that to be crucified which is contrary to the will of God, and which shall not come into His kingdom." <sup>1</sup>

The great truth of this experience brought Fox for the first time into open conflict with the religious people amongst whom **1647** he was travelling. In the earlier part of 1647 he had travelled through parts of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and found sympathetic spirits, amongst whom he names Elizabeth Hooton, who, at a little later date, was the first woman to travel about as a Quaker minister.

Now he came to Lancashire and found an audience amongst the Puritans of Manchester. "Some were convinced," he writes, "who

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 18.

received the Lord's teaching, by which they were confirmed and stood in the truth. But the professors were in a rage, all pleading for sin and imperfection, and could not endure to hear talk of perfection and of a holy and sinless life." <sup>1</sup>

We have here the first mention of a controversy which went on throughout the century between the Quakers and their Puritan opponents, one which was taken up again by other writers when the Methodists championed the same cause.

The teaching of Fox on Christian perfection is intimately associated with his own spiritual experience. He had been revolted by the unreality of a religion which did not affect the whole moral life of its professors, and to him the humility of the Puritan divines, who maintained that man must always be sinful, meant the abandonment of the victorious struggle against evil which was the outcome of obedience to the spirit and life of Christ; it opened the door to hypocrisy and self-indulgence and made the Gospel of none effect.

He could not rest content with the legalist's notion of a remission of the penalties of sin while the evil itself remained uncured.

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 19.

Christianity meant to him a renewal of the whole nature, the healing of the disease of the soul, and not merely freedom from its painful consequences. This does not mean that he ever taught that there was not to be a "daily warfare" against evil, but it was against evil recognised as outside of our true nature.

Nor did this perfection mean attaining a level above which one could not rise; it rather involved and implied continual growth—indeed, "growth in the truth" was a constant watchword with the early Friends. And, finally, George Fox was most insistent in his endeavours to show that this teaching did not lead those who followed it into spiritual pride, but necessarily involved just the reverse. "We are nothing, Christ is all," was his reply to one who had endeavoured to ensnare him into some declaration of his own righteousness. The Christian has no life or goodness apart from the one source of all life and virtue, and the victory he wins is not his own, but that of the power of the Divine Spirit working in him. As we look back upon this great controversy we may perhaps feel that there was truth on both sides; each was trying to emphasise an essential part of our nature, without which the moral life

would not exist ; and yet we may feel that the higher truth was grasped by the Quaker and Methodist preachers. If it be true that our evil nature is always with us, the body, with all its cravings, inherited and acquired, memory and imagination, with all their tendencies to drag us down and lead astray, yet only as we realise that it is not here that our life consists, and that this is not our true self, does the victory over evil become possible. To the Christian the mainspring of life, the source of all power, is in that other life which is not his, but God's ; and as he realises that the life of God is present in the soul of man, and submits his will wholly to it, the new nature, the true self, is built up in him. The struggle goes on, the lower self dies slowly, and we may come at length to recognise as evil what once we thought of as harmless ; but to tolerate the existence of evil in our lives alongside of good is to make a truce which must stop all moral growth. The evil only exists to be driven out and overcome.

Thus began the long public ministry of George Fox, now, as for so many years, rousing the bitterest antagonism amongst a large number of the ministers and church-goers with whom he came into contact, and yet always appealing to other listeners who

seemed waiting for just such a message ; often also reaching beyond the arguments raised against it to the very depths of his opponents' hearts, arousing in them that inward witness to which he made appeal, so that in spite of themselves they were won over to confess the truth.

But Fox had yet to pass through a period of doubt and difficulty. He went back to

1647 Nottinghamshire, and there, he tells us, "the Lord showed me that

the natures of those things which were hurtful without were within, in the hearts and minds of wicked men." Troubled with the sense of this evil, he cried to the Lord saying, "'Why should I be thus, seeing I was never addicted to commit those evils?' and the Lord answered 'That it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions, how else should I speak to all conditions !' and in this I saw the infinite Love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death ; but an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness." <sup>1</sup>

People began to come from a distance to see "the young man that had a discerning spirit," and his words were listened to with

<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> Journal, i. 19, 20 ; i. 24.

eager interest. Fox, too, would go to meetings that the Puritans held in various places in the neighbourhood and take part in discussion or in prayer, though when he was asked to pray again that the deep impression a former prayer of his had made might be renewed, he tells us how "he could not pray in man's will." He spoke to one company of how the blood of Christ of which they were discoursing must be sought in the heart and conscience, and to another gathering at Leicester of the true meaning of the Church as a spiritual household of which Christ was the head; on both occasions he had to meet considerable opposition.

A little later he passed into the Vale of Beavor, preaching as he went. And here one morning, he tells us, "as I was sitting by the fire, a great cloud came over me, and a temptation beset me; but I sat still. And it was said, 'All things come by nature;' and the elements and stars came over me, so that I was in a manner quite clouded with it. But as I sat still and silent, the people of the house perceived nothing. And as I sat still under it, and let it alone, a living hope arose in me, and a true voice, which said, 'There is a living God who made all things.' And immediately the cloud and temptation



vanished away and life rose over it all; my heart was glad, and I praised the living God. After some time, I met with some people who had a notion that there was no God, but that all things come by nature. I had a great dispute with them, and overturned them, and made some of them confess that there is a living God, and then I saw that it was good that I had gone through that exercise.”<sup>1</sup> How many preachers before and after George Fox had failed to touch their hearers because they lacked just this inward understanding of and sympathy with the condition of those to whom he spoke, of which we get a glimpse in this passage. In this case he not only saw the condition in which the men stood, but had himself gone through something of the experience, and he perceives that he could not have given the true answer to doubt had he not known himself what doubt meant.

And now people friendly to his teaching were beginning to meet together regularly in more places than one. He speaks  
**1648** in his Journal for the year 1648 of there being a Meeting of Friends at Eaton, near Derby, the first occasion on which the term afterwards adopted by the new Society is used by Fox.

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 26.

In the midst of such work as this it is characteristic of Fox that he felt it his duty to go and speak a message to the Justices who were at the time sitting in connection with one of the periodic hirings of servants, to warn them not to oppress the servants in their wages. Again and again in his *Journal*<sup>1</sup> we find record of this eagerness of his to apply the principles of Christianity to all the social relationships of men, and to expose the worthlessness of a religion which did not concern itself with removing injustice and impurity from the lives of its followers.

In all this he felt the profound gulf that lay between the professed aim of clergy, physicians, and lawyers, and their actual lives and practice. And now, he tells us, "the Lord God opened to me by His invisible power that every man was enlightened by the Divine light of Christ; and I saw it shine through all; and that they that believed in it came out of condemnation to the light of life and became the children of it<sup>2</sup>; but they that hated it, and did not believe in it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ. This I saw in the pure openings of the light, without the help of any man; neither did I then know where to find

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, i. 34-35.

it in the Scriptures, though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it. For I saw in that Light and Spirit which was before the Scriptures were given forth, and which led the holy men of God to give them forth, that all must come to that Spirit if they would know God or Christ or the Scriptures aright, which they that gave them forth were led and taught by.”<sup>\*</sup>

With this message burning in his heart Fox went forth. “With and by this Divine power and Spirit of God, and the light of Jesus, I was to bring people off from all their own ways, to Christ, the new and living Way; and from their churches which men had made and gathered, to the Church in God, the general assembly written in heaven which Christ is the head of: and off from the world’s teachers, made by men, to learn of Christ . . . and off from all the world’s worships, to know the Spirit of Truth in the inward parts, and to be led thereby; that in it they might worship the Father of Spirits. . . . And I was to bring people off from all the world’s religions, which are vain, that they might know the pure religion, might visit the fatherless, the widows, and the strangers, and keep themselves from the spots

<sup>\*</sup> Journal, i. 34.

of the world ; then there would not be so many beggars, the sight of whom often grieved my heart, as it denoted so much hard-heartedness amongst them that professed the name of Christ. . . .”

“When the Lord sent me forth into the world,” Fox goes on, “He forbade me to put off my hat to any, high or low ; and I was required to Thee and Thou all men and women, without any respect to rich or poor, great or small. . . . Neither might I bow or scrape with my leg to any one ; and this made the sects and professions to rage.”<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult for us to-day to realise the bitter suffering which this step involved for George Fox and his friends ; nor perhaps at first sight is it easy to realise how much was implied in their protest.

In doing what they did they were not merely shocking the conventions of the day, but making an appeal from a pagan class system masquerading under the guise of Christianity to the deep underlying principles of the social teaching of Jesus, involving the recognition of human brotherhood in the realities of life as well as in the formulæ of worship.

The storm of opposition aroused by this

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 38.

fearless stand made by the early Quakers for manhood and fraternity shows that their opponents felt that this was no mere quibbling of grammatical precisians. "O! the blows, punchings, beatings, and imprisonments that we underwent, for not putting off our hats to men! . . . The bad language and evil usage we received on this account are hard to be expressed, besides the danger we were sometimes in, of losing our lives for this matter, and that by the great professors of Christianity, who thereby evinced that they were not true believers."

Fox passed about upon his errand pleading in the law courts for a truer spirit of justice, speaking to innkeepers and publicans to warn them not to let folk have "more drink than would do them good," and speaking in fairs and markets against the prevailing dishonesty and cozening.

Sharing as he did the early Puritans' attitude towards sports and music, we find him now, as at later periods of his life, protesting against the revels and amusements which seemed to him born of an evil spirit. In this point the Quakers did not transcend the limits of their age, and much that in its essence we now feel to be good and helpful to the whole life of man, was condemned by

them severely, the more readily as no doubt the drama which they knew was the corrupt one of the later Renaissance, and they thought of dancing, as they so often saw it, simply as an excuse for indulgence in luxury and for arousing the passions of the lower nature.

But what troubled George Fox more than the open revolt against the Divine law was the deeper failure of the professional Christianity about him. "The earthly spirit of the priests wounded my life," he writes, "and when I heard the bell toll to call people together to the steeple-house, it struck at my life; for it was just like a market-bell, to gather the people together, that the priest might set forth his ware to sale. O! the vast sums of money that are gotten by the trade they make of selling the Scriptures, and by their preaching, from the highest bishop to the lowest priest! What one trade else in the world is comparable to it? Notwithstanding the Scriptures were given forth freely, and Christ commanded His ministers to preach freely, and the prophets and apostles denounced judgment against all covetous hirelings and diviners for money."<sup>1</sup>

With the sense of all this glowing hot within him, there came upon him the call to

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 41.

raise his voice in protest against it. Again and again in after life he would enter a church and address the congregation, but almost always, as far as one can gather, after the preacher had ended, if preacher there was there; a practice which would seem disorderly perhaps to-day, but was general at that date, and justified by custom if not by law. On this occasion, carried away by the message that burned within him, he actually interrupted the minister before he had concluded. Fox's own words tell the story best.

"Now as I went towards Nottingham on a First day in the morning, with Friends to a

**1649** Meeting there, when I came on the top of a hill in the sight of the town, I espied the great steeple-house; and the Lord said unto me, 'Thou must go cry against yonder great idol and against the worshippers therein.' I said nothing of this to the Friends that were with me, but went on with them to the Meeting, where the mighty power of the Lord was amongst us, in which I left Friends sitting in the Meeting, and I went away to the steeple-house. When I came there, all the people looked like fallow ground and the priest, like a great lump of earth, stood in his pulpit above. He took for his text these

words of Peter, 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.' And he told the people that this was the Scriptures, by which they were to try all doctrines, religions, and opinions. Now the Lord's power was so mighty upon me and so strong in me, that I could not hold, but was made to cry out and say, 'O no, it is not the Scriptures,' and I told them what it was, namely, the Holy Spirit, by which the holy men of God gave forth the Scriptures, whereby opinions, religions, and judgments were to be tried; for it led into all truth, and so gave the knowledge of all truth. The Jews had the Scriptures and yet resisted the Holy Ghost, and rejected Christ, the bright morning star. They persecuted Christ and His apostles, and took upon them to try their doctrines by the Scriptures, but erred in judgment, and did not try them aright, because they tried without the Holy Ghost. As I spoke thus amongst them the officers came and took me away, and put me into a nasty, stinking prison."<sup>1</sup>

Looking back upon the scene after all

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 42,



these years, one feels that the prophet's personality and message must be his supreme justification. Fox was one of those rare titanic natures before whom our miserable conventions shrink into nothingness.

To apologise for the breach of public order, to explain away what we may feel to have been a misinterpretation of the preacher's text, would be to misunderstand alike the man and the moment. In doing what he did George Fox was true to the highest that was in him, a message that rose immeasurably above the preacher's worthy platitudes. He was indeed acting in harmony with the advice of Paul to the Corinthian prophets, enjoining the one who might be speaking to keep silence if a revelation were given to one sitting by (1 Cor. xiv. 29, 30).

The power of Fox's message seems to have made deep impress on the congregation, and not least on the sheriff at whose house he was kept a prisoner; until he was transferred to the common jail.

Released without a trial, Fox continued his journeyings; sometimes set upon by the ignorant mob, cruelly beaten and bruised by them, with their hands, Bibles, and sticks, set in the stocks, and haled before mayors and magistrates, but now and again meeting with

a friendlier response, praying with a sick man, interceding for a lunatic woman, exhorting excisemen to justice. At one time he had to meet a company of Baptists who clung to a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, at another it was a group of Pantheistic Ranters whom he strove to convince.

At length, in the autumn of 1650, he was committed by two local justices to Derby Jail, along with another Friend, for **1650** blasphemy. The immediate cause lay in his having spoken to the people at the conclusion of a public "lecture" in the church, but the justices seem to have been in doubt what to do, for Fox tells us they kept him for eight hours, sending him in and out of the court-room before they came to a decision.

"Sometimes they would tell me in a deriding manner that I was taken up in raptures. At last they asked me whether I was sanctified. I answered, 'Yes, for I was in the paradise of God.' Then they asked me if I had no sin? I answered, 'Christ my Saviour has taken away my sin, and in Him there is no sin.' They asked how we knew that Christ did abide in us? I said, 'By His Spirit that He has given us.' They tempt-

ingly asked if any of us were Christ? I answered, 'Nay, we were nothing, Christ is all.' They said, 'If a man steal, is it no sin?' I answered, 'All unrighteousness is sin.' So when they had wearied themselves in examining me they committed me and one other man to the House of Correction in Derby for six months, as blasphemers."<sup>1</sup>

While he was in prison, he was visited by many Puritans, who came, as he says, "to plead for sin and imperfection" with him. The jailer was at first very hostile, but one night came to confess his sorrow and beg to be allowed to lodge with his prisoner. In the night he poured out his heart to Fox and told him how he believed in the words Fox had spoken of the true faith.

Not bearing to act against his conscience longer, the jailer went next morning to the magistrates to plead for mitigation of their sentence. They granted Fox leave to walk a mile, in the hope that the troublesome prisoner would take the opportunity of escape thus afforded him, but they hardly realised the stuff of which he was made. Indeed, when his relations came in anxiety and offered bail to the extent of a hundred pounds, in those days a considerable sum, he

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 50, 51.

refused to consent to their doing this, as he would not thus make admission of guilt.

During this time Fox continued to be visited by many inquirers, amongst others by earnest-minded troopers from the army. So moved were they by the force of his character that the authorities hit upon the device of giving Fox a commission in one of the new companies which were being raised for service against Charles II. in Scotland; his personality would attract men to join the forces, and Derby would be rid of this sturdy troubler of the existing order. It was a step which would seem scarcely strange to men in those days, when the army contained so much of the advanced wing of Puritan thought; it was wide enough to admit Ranters and Fifth Monarchists, as well as men like Colonel John Lilburne, the Leveller, and many of the soldiers were in sympathy with some sides at least of the teaching of Fox.

But neither justices nor soldiers realised the spirit which animated the man with whom they had to deal. It is worth while to quote his own words:—

“Now the time of my commitment to the House of Correction being nearly ended, and there being many new soldiers raised, the Commissioners would have made me captain

over them ; and the soldiers said they would have none but me. So the keeper of the House of Correction was commanded to bring me before the Commissioners and soldiers in the market-place ; and there they offered me that preferment, as they called it, asking me if I would not take up arms for the Commonwealth against Charles Stuart ? I told them I knew from whence all wars rose, even from the lust, according to James's doctrine ; and that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars. But they courted me to accept their offer, and thought I did but compliment them. But I told them I was come into the covenant of peace, which was before wars and strifes were. They said they offered it in love and kindness to me, because of my virtue, and such like flattering words they used. But I told them if that was their love and kindness, I trampled it under my feet. Then their rage got up, and they said, ' Take him away, jailer, and put him into the dungeon amongst the rogues and felons.' So I was had away and put into a lousy, stinking place, without any bed, among thirty felons, where I was kept almost half a year, unless it were at times ; for they would sometimes let me walk in the gar-

den, having a belief that I would not go away."<sup>1</sup>

This time of imprisonment was not, however, lost for Fox. The injustice of our legal system pressed heavily upon him as he watched the effect upon his fellow-prisoners. "I was moved to write to the judges concerning their putting men to death for cattle and money and small matters, and to show them how contrary it was to the law of God in old time; for I was under great suffering in my spirit because of it. . . . Moreover, I laid before the judges what a hurtful thing it was that prisoners should lie so long in jail; showing how they learned wickedness one of another, in talking of their bad deeds. . . ." <sup>2</sup>

Once again a determined effort was made by the justices to get Fox to enlist as a soldier, and he was committed  
**1651** once more to jail; finally, as the winter of 1651 was beginning, he was set free. From Derby he went again to his own countryside and thence to Burton and Lichfield. As he saw in the distance the spires of the Cathedral, a sense of oppression came over him: it was his duty to go to this place, he felt, and leaving his companions he set off alone. On a hill a mile from the town

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 68.

<sup>2</sup> i. 70, 71.

he left his boots with some shepherds, though it was winter time, and walked barefoot into Lichfield.

It was market-day, but no one laid hands on him as he passed up and down the streets crying, "Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield!" and as he went it seemed to him as though a channel of blood ran through the streets, and stood red in the market-place. And so he passed back again to the shepherds, without understanding the meaning of his message.

It is the one incident in the life of Fox which seems to tell of a brain overwrought, overtaxed with the hardships through which he had passed, or with that mental and spiritual struggle through which he had entered into peace. It seems, too, to have been a thing over which he himself puzzled, for he notes the deep consideration which came upon him as to the cause of what he had been sent to do. "For though Parliament had the minster, one while, and the King another, and much blood had been shed in the town during the wars between them, yet that was no more than had befallen many other places. & But afterwards I came to understand that in the Emperor Diocletian's time, a thousand Christians were

martyred in Lichfield. So I was to go without my shoes, through the channel of their blood, and unto the pool of their blood in the market-place, that I might raise up the memorial of the blood of those martyrs which had been shed above a thousand years before, and lay cold in their streets. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

The struggle at Lichfield between the two parties in the war had been peculiarly fierce and bitter, and doubtless the embers of hatred and ill-will were still warm; something of this the stranger may have felt as he uttered his words of denunciation. The explanation which in later years he himself thought the right one, is one which has been dismissed as fanciful by more recent writers. Yet, however much exaggeration there may have been in the story of the persecution under Diocletian, the name of the city, “The Field of Corpses,” points to some tragedy in the far-off past whose echoes may in some way we hardly understand have reached his inward ear; his mind was dimly conscious of some terrible scene of cruelty and bloodshed, and his heart rose in protest against it, as against that spirit of persecution which was still alive in the hearts of many of the citizens of Lichfield.

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 78, 79.



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<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 78, 79.

The next few years were full of fruitful service for Fox. He passed up and down holding meetings, and was thus the means of convincing a number of men afterwards well known in the new Society; especially was this the case in the North of England, where in Yorkshire Richard Farnsworth, James Nayler, and William Dewsbury joined the ranks of the Quakers. In the East Riding he was more than once the guest of a friendly magistrate, Justice Hotham, and he visited many of the churches of the district to speak to the people after the minister had ended his sermon. Sometimes, as at York, the outcome was that he was attacked by an angry mob, but the result was often far different, so that a lady of Justice Hotham's acquaintance told him how "there came an angel or spirit unto the church at Beverley and spoke the wonderful things of God, to the astonishment of all that were there; and when it had done, it passed away, and they did not know whence it came, nor whither it went, but it astonished all, both priests, professors, and magistrates of the town."¹ Sometimes the minister of the church himself was so moved as to confess the truth of the stranger's message, or even to go further, like

¹ Journal, i. 81.

Philip Scafe, of Staithes, whom "the Lord by His free Spirit did afterwards make a free minister of His free Gospel."<sup>1</sup> At Pickering an old clergyman hailed him as brother, accompanying him from place to place to his own church on the moors, and thence onward.

But it was not always such easy work, and Fox had often to sleep out in the fields, and sometimes had difficulty in getting the people to sell him food. On more than one occasion friendly magistrates offered to interfere to punish the men who had wronged him, but Fox always refused to appear against them, even when he had been beaten and dragged through the street and stoned and struck till he was covered with blood.

It was amongst the yeomen of the northern dales apparently that Fox found his most numerous converts. Passing beyond Settle, though he had eaten little for some days, he climbed Pendle Hill, and looking down upon the country before him, the Lord, he tells us, let him see in what places He had a great people to be gathered.<sup>2</sup>

In the neighbourhood of Sedbergh there was soon a large congregation of Friends gathered together, and hard by, at Firbank

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 86.

<sup>2</sup> i. 109

Chapel in Westmorland, two local independent ministers, John Audland and Francis Howgill, became converts to the Quaker teaching. They had both been preaching in the chapel in the morning, and in the afternoon they and their congregation gathered round George Fox, as he sat on a rock hard by, and the numbers grew until it was thought there were above a thousand there. For well nigh three hours they listened as Fox spoke to them of the Spirit of God in themselves, of the ideals of early Christianity and the apostasy that later had entered into the Church. They were not to wonder at his preaching on the hillside instead of in their chapel, for there was no peculiar holiness in any building; God's true temples were not houses of stone, but hearts of men, and His priesthood free and open to all, not confined to one class or supported by enforced tithes. "The Lord's convincing power," adds Fox, "accompanied my ministry, and reached the hearts of the people, whereby many were convinced, and all the teachers of that congregation, who were many, were convinced of God's everlasting truth."<sup>1</sup>

Passing into Furness through Westmorland,

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 115.

where at Underbarrow he had some discussion with the Presbyterian preacher, Edward Burrough, shortly to become one of the most eminent of the Quaker ministers, George Fox came now to Ulverstone and the adjoining hamlet of Swarthmore.

At Swarthmore Hall lived one of the most influential commoners in the North of England—Judge Thomas Fell, a close friend of Bradshaw; since 1645 he had been a member of the Long Parliament, and was now one of Cromwell's judges of the Welsh Circuit, and shortly to become Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He was married to a Lancashire lady, Margaret Askew, a woman of exceptional power of character. The Judge was from home on circuit, and his wife was absent for the day, but they were accustomed, as she tells us, to entertain any travelling preachers and "religious people" who visited that part of the country, and George Fox was brought by a friend of his to the hospitable house. He had some discussion with the clergyman of Ulverstone, William Lampitt, and when Mrs. Fell returned at night she was troubled to learn of the dispute, as she had been an earnest follower of Mr. Lampitt. They had further

talk together on the subject, and then on a fast day in the church at Ulverstone the opportunity came to see things in a new light.

The congregation had been gathered for some time before Fox entered. "When I came," he writes, "Lampitt was singing with his people, but his spirit was so foul, and the matter they sang so unsuitable to their states, that after they had done singing, I was moved of the Lord to speak to him and the people."<sup>1</sup> Margaret Fell has given us a vivid picture of the scene. "When they were singing before the sermon he came in, and when they had done singing he stood up upon a seat or form, and desired that he might have liberty to speak, and he that was in the pulpit said he might. And the first words that he spoke were as followeth: 'He is not a Jew that is one outward; neither is that circumcision which is outward, but he is a Jew that is one inward, and that is circumcision which is of the heart.' And so he went on, and said how that Christ was the Light of the world, and lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and that by this light they might be gathered to God, &c. I stood up in my pew and wondered at his doctrine, for I had never

heard such before. And then he went on and opened the Scriptures, and said : ' The Scriptures were the prophets' words, and Christ's and the apostles' words, and what as they spoke they enjoyed, and possessed . . . then what had any to do with the Scriptures, but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth? You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this, but what canst thou say? . . . What thou speakest is it inwardly from God? '

" This opened me so that it cut me to the heart, and then I saw clearly we were all wrong. So I sat down in my pew again, and cried bitterly, and I cried in my spirit to the Lord, ' We are all thieves, we are all thieves ; we have taken the Scriptures in words, and know nothing of them in ourselves.' "

She was but dimly conscious, she tells us, of his going on to denounce the false prophets and priests of the present day, and of the Puritan justice, John Sawrey, caking upon the churchwardens to take him away. Fox tells us how she protested on his behalf, Lampitt himself also calling out, " Let him speak." Finally Sawrey lost patience, and ordered the constable to remove the troublesome preacher, and Fox concluded his words to the people in the graveyard without.



Fox went on upon his missionary tour, and shortly afterwards two other Quaker preachers—Richard Farnsworth and James Nayler—came to Swarthmore, and aided the new converts greatly.

The Judge was met upon his home-coming with the unwelcome news that his wife and family were bewitched by these meddlesome strangers. Judge Fell returned to his house highly displeased and not a little prejudiced against the Quaker fanatics, but after some talk with them he was better satisfied. At night George Fox arrived, and with the Judge's assent a meeting was held in the parlour of the Hall, at which Fox spoke. Next day there was a little gathering of Quakers at the house, and as they were discussing where they could hold their meetings Judge Fell broke in with the invitation, "You may meet here if you will." For some time his attitude was rather one of kindly toleration, to his wife's friends than of approval, and he rode alone with his serving-man to church to attend the parish services, but after a while his point of view changed, and, discontinuing all other attendance at places of worship, he would sit in his little inner room with the door open, while the Friends met in the great parlour adjoining,

listening to the words spoken, and doubtless sharing in their quiet waiting upon God. So until his death in 1658 Judge Fell was able to be of great use to the growing company of Quakers in Westmorland and Lancashire in mitigating to some extent the persecution to which they were subjected, and in influencing the magistrates towards greater leniency.

Swarthmore Hall thus became a centre to which Quaker preachers might return, after long months of travel and hard usage, broken by frequent imprisonments. There they were always sure of a welcome and of safety from persecution, from which the Judge's position shielded them with even greater security than might have been the case had he actually joined their number.

But though the existence of such a spot—almost the only place in England where a Quaker might rest secure—was doubtless of great importance in the growth of the new movement, the thought of fleeing from persecution was far from the minds of these pioneers of liberty and conscience. What was of much greater importance to Fox and his fellow-preachers was the knowledge that here they had a settled congregation of worshippers in full sympathy with them, with numerous similar groups in the surrounding

countryside, forming a centre where they might always find the help of fellowship and the spiritual refreshment which they needed when weary of heart. Often, too, the consciousness of the life there must have helped them when cut off from the world in prison and far from outward fellowship. We may think of the little circle which met regularly in worship at Swarthmore henceforth as the altar fire from which the light of the Quaker message was borne by many a brave preacher up and down the land; hither they could always return to kindle afresh another torch.

Apart from this deepest of all helps, Swarthmore Hall was a centre of information for the first generation of Quakers. The travelling preachers corresponded much with one another, but more than with any other with Margaret Fell. Often indeed to write to her was the surest way to communicate with each other, for at any moment one and another might be cast into jail as they journeyed from place to place.

Fox did not stay long now at Swarthmore, but went on this side and that through Furness and Westmorland, preaching with the most far-reaching results. Convert after convert, not a few of them from amongst the ministers who opposed him, presently obeyed a call to proclaim the same message.

### III

#### *THE MESSAGE OF EARLY QUAKERISM*

A SKETCH of the early Quaker movement, however slight, would be incomplete without some expression of the message which its preachers proclaimed.

In attempting to realise what the teaching of the early Quakers meant one is met at the outset by what seems an almost unsurmountable obstacle in the bewildering mass of books and pamphlets whose very titles prove a terror to the bibliographer (for not a few extend to two closely-printed pages), and whose contents provide in many cases still greater difficulties to the modern reader, in their formless disregard of style and grammar, if not in the reiteration and incoherence of their thoughts. Yet the very absence of real literature amongst the larger part of the writings of the early Friends may help us to see more

clearly their true message, which was one lived rather than written, passed on from soul to soul by directer and deeper channels than the narrow roads of logic. The more we see the roughness of the tools used, the more clearly we shall perceive<sup>e</sup> the Divine power that was with them, and made them what they were.

One thing that cannot fail to strike the most superficial student of the early Quaker writers is their intense conviction. They speak with authority as having firm hold of Him who is invisible. They are prophets, denouncing the evil and opening up the way of truth as messengers of God. And with a spirit like that of the old martyrs of the early days of the Church, they rejoiced in their sufferings, and went cheerfully through the fire of persecution and the storm of calumny and hate. What was it all for? we ask.

Throughout the writings of the early Friends runs one all-pervading, overpowering thought—that of the Light within. In every human heart, they tell us, there speaks the voice of God, and we have heard Him. The Light of Christ shines still for all men in the inmost of their souls, and in obedience to its influence lies hope for every man, whether Pagan, Christian, or Jew. Somewhere at the

back of all our lives, in us but not of us, there shines a ray of that Divine Life which was given to the world in all fulness in Jesus of Nazareth. If we obey this Light of Christ in our hearts, even though our knowledge be most incomplete, the Divine Life that witnesses to the evil within and inspires to good will flow through us, guiding us to truth, and bring to birth a new nature within us, which conquers sin and overcomes evil with good.

This is the unseen work of the Spirit of Christ in the heart, and in this Divine Light alone does all the revelation hitherto given to men become real to us, which without it were no true revelation at all. It is only by sharing in a measure the Spirit through which all inspired Scripture was written that we come to understand what the Scriptures mean. Without this we might know about, but only thus can we know.

The Gospel of early Quakerism was a religion universal and real ; something which all men needed and which the poorest and most ignorant could understand, which could make the weakest strong. It was the realisation of the words of the Master, "The Kingdom of God is within you," "the Kingdom of God is with power." It appealed to the hearts of all

because all had within them the Divine witness. "To that of God in your consciences I speak," George Fox would say, again and again, as he strove to convince his adversaries.

What the early Friends' preached was, they tell us, "Primitive Christianity revived"; the professional Christianity of their day appeared to them unreal; they were sensible that there had been a great apostasy from the ideals and methods of the early Church, and that because there was apostasy from the Spirit of Christ. Something of this feeling may, I believe, be traced from the very earliest days in the history of the successive movements in the life of the Church, which are now branded as heresies or honoured as reformations. The Montanists in the days of Tertullian, the Paulicians in later times, and in the Middle Ages, St. Francis within the Church and the Catharists and Waldensians without it, alike appealed from the corruption and laxness of official Christianity to the purity and simplicity of Christ. There is no need to show how Wyclif and Luther did the same. And of these, the ones to whom the early Friends seem most near in spirit did much more than make an appeal to a higher moral standard or to a truer view of doctrine. They were

strong because they came into direct touch themselves with the Unseen. They did not take their faith from others, but were led by the Spirit of God themselves. The contrast is no new one between the orthodox moral Christianity of the organised Church and the living Christianity of the men who are rebuked or despised as misguided fanatics, and perhaps abused as heretics by their own generation, and afterwards honoured as heroes and saints, though the spirit of their message may be disregarded.

The story of early Quakerism is that of one long battle. Through deep travail of soul George Fox had come, before the great Light shone clearly in his heart; and then he had his religion at first hand. All about him he found seekers discontented with second-hand truths; their fingers were already groping at the shutters of the soul's windows, and they had but to open them for God's daylight to come in. The natural result for them all was that when once they had thus felt the power of God's touch in their own lives, and the reality of communion with Him in their hearts, they ceased to ask help from the teacher who could only tell them about God at third hand, whose sole knowledge came from the instruction of others, whether by



word of mouth or through the written page, even though that written page might be the Bible. And they could not stop there ; they had to help to persuade the unwilling mind, too, to open its windows, and they knew that somehow or other it could always be done, just because no soul was altogether ceiled up from the Light ; somewhere through some chink or cranny one Divine ray at least was pouring in, and all they had to do was to find that place, and get the hindrances moved away within and without, so that more light might come in. When they looked at the orthodox traditional Christianity about them, they found that what hindered people from seeing the light was often not so much the living errors as the old dead truths. Such people were content with religion at fourth hand, doled out to them by teachers who only got it at third hand themselves. The Quaker could never be content with a regular supply of certified truth dealt out like medicine from a physician's hand.

He had found the fountain of all truth and felt the power and life of Christ in his own heart ; how then could he have unity with teachers who admitted that their whole knowledge of God came from the Scriptures and

the writings of pious men? And what wonder that the controversy between the early Friends and their orthodox opponents was so acute on both sides?

As we turn over the pages of those old pamphlets in which they waged war on one another, we cannot but regret their harshness, and sometimes the confidence with which the Quakers proclaimed their prophetic character may shock us, who are so cautious and lukewarm in expressing our own convictions. But I believe the impartial critic (and it is not easy for any member of the Society to be impartial in this) will not hesitate to say on which side there is more of Christian charity.

*"Hell broken loose ; or a history of the Quakers,"* are the opening words of the title of a pamphlet by Thomas Underhill, citizen and stationer of London ; *"Quakerism no Christianity,"* *"The Pilgrim's Progress from Quakerism to Christianity,"* *"The thorough Quaker no Christian,"* stand out among the titles of books written against the early Quakers, who, though their replies were often strong enough in their language, were yet able to write "Friend," or at least "Poor Souls," in addressing their opponents.

**But** if it does nothing else, this very bitterness helps us to realise the depth of the gulf

which separates the two parties ; a bitterness which one finds repeated in the history of similar movements, like Methodism in the eighteenth century or Quietism on the Continent at the close of the seventeenth, in both of which one of the great points, if not the centre of dispute, lay in the claim made by the innovators to a direct personal communion with the Divine, and an individual experience which their opponents considered to be presumptuous and founded on fanatical delusion if not on wilful deceit.<sup>1</sup>

These instances alone will show that the great central fact of the Quaker movement was not altogether peculiar to it ; but this was indeed a claim made by the early Friends themselves. What they preached was the Christianity of the first golden years which had been realised again in part at least by the martyrs of truth down all the ages. They claimed kinship willingly with Lollard heretic and persecuted Catholic Quietist, and would surely have rejoiced in much too of the message to which the old Methodists a hundred years later bore witness, or in that of Stundists and Dukhobors in the present

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pastoral letter of Robert Lowth, Bishop of London, on Whitefield's Journal ("A Caution against Enthusiasm").

day. It may be doubted, perhaps, whether they would have felt equally at home amid the comfortable societies of our own time, or whether we should not have felt a little afraid of the daring spirit, the uncompromising outspokenness, the intensity, and the fire of the Quakers of the first generation.

There can be, I think, no doubt that the central doctrine of Quakerism, is that of the Universal and saving Light of Christ. The supreme place given by the early Friends to the Light of Christ in the heart, was felt in their own lives before it was understood as a philosophical principle, and from it depends all that distinguished the practical ethics of Quakerism.

The philosophical attitude, the theology and life theory of Quakerism, is bound up with a fact of individual experience. It is no "theory in the air," assented to by an act of the intellectual faculties, which may be dispelled by exercise of logic or upset by overwhelming argument. It is rather an attitude of soul resulting from inward experience, and necessarily affecting the whole conduct of life in every way.

All the peculiarities of the early Quakers, in so far as they were not merely those of the Puritan age, conditioned by the limitations

of the day, may be traced to this one central principle : the immediate revelation of Christ in every heart, and the consequent call for the submission of the whole life to the Divine source of Light and power, and to no other guide.

After all, with the deepest aspect of the great truth of the central doctrine of Quakerism words cannot deal. Language fails to express that which goes beyond all the effort of our intellect to follow. Spirit speaks to Spirit, and only he who is born of the Spirit can understand something of what that birth means. Thus the early Friends seemed constantly to make an appeal in their missionary work to the Divine spark of Light in the souls of their hearers, that like might respond to like. "To that of God in you I speak," writes George Fox ; "I directed men to the Light of Christ in their hearts." The preacher was only an instrument to put the hearer in touch with God ; he was not to draw men to himself, but to turn them to the deeper source of all power ; his part was to seek out amidst his hearers the conductive strands which were capable of receiving the heavenly electricity, and when once the listeners were in touch with that, his own work was done. "To take men to Christ and leave them

there" was George Fox's explanation of the aim of ministry.

Let us consider briefly something of what this meant in its application to religious thought and to the conduct of life. We naturally ask ourselves in what it was that the Christianity of George Fox differed from that of Baxter and Bunyan, good men and zealous opponents as they were.

George Fox records as the first great revelation that came to him, the learning of the truth, that true belief meant the passing from death to life. "About the beginning of the year 1646, as I was going to Coventry, and approaching towards the gate, a consideration arose in me how it was said that 'all Christians are believers, both Protestants and Papists,' and the Lord opened to me that if all were believers, then they were all born of God, and passed from death to life, and that none were true believers but such; and though others said they were believers, yet they were not."<sup>1</sup> The Puritans about him might not have expressed themselves as he did, but they, many of them, surely knew themselves too this new birth of the soul, and the Friends were willing to recognise this, although sometimes they did not perceive

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 7.

it in individuals whose names we honour now. But though the Puritans often went through the same spiritual experience, they bound their new life fast in swaddling clothes, and their whole religious system was so wrapped about it as to hinder and prevent its growth. They had felt the Divine touch in their lives, but instead of surrendering themselves freely to it, they looked for human guidance instead. They sought help from their learned preachers and theologians, and they searched the Scriptures thinking to find eternal life in them, instead of in the living Christ of whom they testified.

They were at best content often to be fed upon the milk with which their spiritual life began, and were too timid to seek the solid food for which it was meant to prepare them. They did not dare to open their minds to a new truth, and because they did not think of the old truth as living truth, it too often became dead to them,—and is not a dead truth often the most dangerous form of falsehood?

Practically, too, there was one great difference between Quaker and Puritan, in the optimism of the one as compared with the pessimistic convictions of the other. The Quaker knew that at any moment he might

fall into sin, if he did not abide faithfully in the light and power of his Lord, but he believed that his Master was a real God, whose power could go to the roots of his life and keep him from the evil ; if he fell, it was his fault, not God's. • Sin could be constantly overcome by the indwelling power of Christ and the command of the Saviour, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect," was not given in bitter irony, but with a real purpose. For if indwelling sin was to be ever blackening the life of the true Christian, in the way the Puritans pictured it, the moral law became a cruel mockery, and all effort after holiness hollow and vain.

It was contended by the opponents of the Quakers that their doctrine of the light of Christ within tended to make them neglect the revelation of God to man in the past recorded in the Scriptures, and to disregard the historic manifestation of Christ and the work of His life and death.

Yet neglect of the study of the Scriptures was certainly no fault of the early Quakers. Often enough they were able to make it clear that they knew their Bibles better than their adversaries. And indeed the position they took up was the only one by which the Scrip-



tures could be truly honoured. Their orthodox opponents were in danger of making an idol of a Book, but failed to see that it was only as the Spirit of Truth made its messages living and real to their minds that the Bible could bring to them words from God.

And so too in regard to belief in the historic Christ, the Quakers felt that the professing orthodox Christians about them were honouring a far-off Saviour who was not realised as having any actual and present influence on their lives, whether they thought of Him as having lived and died in a distant land in an age long passed away, or as existing in infinite glory in a heaven that was altogether remote from their daily work, in another world that they would only know after death or at the Last Day.

It was as though, in its exaltation of the Scriptures as "the word of God," and in its unliving worship of the historic Christ, the professing Church had built a hundred beautiful shrines over the places where God had once spoken to men, and a great cathedral over the spot where the dead Christ had lain, only to make it clearer that God no longer spoke to His people now, and that Jesus of Nazareth was passed far away from the lives of men.

But the early Quakers could not thus shut God out of His world, nor be content to worship a dead Saviour. The Almighty speaks still, they tell us, to the listening ear, and Christ is alive, and not dead. By making the Scriptures the only revelation of God, the Puritans brought it about too often that they ceased to be a revelation at all, because when revelation is not present and actual its very meaning vanishes away; while because the Quakers knew that God speaks to all men and had never ceased to instruct His Church, the Scriptures became to them true channels of revelation, and their messages quivered with life. The Bible took its right place, not as a wonderful God-made book, fallen from heaven among men, without a parallel of any kind, and with nothing in our lives to correspond to its revelation, but as the unique revelation amidst a never-ending series of revelations, containing the history of God's dealings with men exemplified in the story of the nation which had listened best to His voice and had in some measure risen to its call to be the medium of revelation to others; above all, as containing the great record of God's supreme self-manifestation to man in Christ, and of His work for us, to which the Light in all our hearts calls us to respond.

The life of Christ on earth was to the Puritan an event utterly isolated; "die Eingreifung Gottes in die Geschichte," to use the modern phrase of Herrmann.

But to the Quaker, God's hand was not thrust once only into this universe of His, but is always working there; He reveals Himself to every man through the Light of Christ in the heart, and it is just because of this inner Light that the supreme manifestation of God in the Incarnation can make appeal to us. If Christ's own nature were not at work in our hearts through this Divine Light, it would remain foreign to us and utterly apart; the Incarnation would be useless, because we could never understand it. It is only as the Light works in our heart that we get any true idea of the Incarnation at all. For the darkness cannot comprehend the Light, and it is because the Light goes on shining still that we are able to see. We could never know that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself if it were not for the answering witness of the Spirit of God in our souls.

With this all-embracing Gospel in their hearts it was small wonder that the early Friends were eager to carry their message to the whole world, making essay, for instance, to win over the Pope to the truth,

whether by writing him epistles or by making pilgrimage to Rome; and George Fox's letters to the Dey of Algiers, the Grand Cham, and the Emperor of China represent the same spirit, which was not wholly without its reward. Mary<sup>9</sup> Fisher, when she visited the Sultan, was received with honour as a prophetess; and we know from the journal of John Woolman, how, in later days, a true Quaker preacher found his way direct to the heart of the unlettered Indian. One wonders what the result might have been had such Quaker missionaries been able to find an audience amongst those Eastern nations whose mode of thought seems one to which the true spiritual Christianity should appeal in a peculiar way, though they are repelled by the intellectual system of orthodox dogmatics and by the ecclesiastical organisation of the great Western Churches.

But no view of the central doctrine of Quakerism would be adequate which did not allude to the effect it had upon the worship and the whole life of the men who held it.

The reality of personal communion between the soul and God through Christ's unseen presence in the heart rendered it needless to insist on the observance of external forms and conditions, which at best

could only be channels of the grace of God; and he who had heard the Divine voice call him, and been given his message by the Master did not need to have it granted him by any other authority. Nor could the brotherhood of the Church exclude any men or women from any work to which they had received the heavenly call, under pretext of incapacity arising from sex or station. All true Christians must be in touch with God, and the organisation of the Church should be such as to help them to obey Him and fulfil whatever service He calls them to, as simply as might be. Ministry then could never be confined to one fixed class, still less treated as the subject for bargains and money-making.

And the gatherings of the Church for worship must be free too, as times when the children of the kingdom are gathered together to meet with the Father and to hear His voice, and if He call them to it, to hand on His message to others. It was not possible then that these meetings should be fettered by fixed liturgies however beautiful, for they must needs be often chains, though chains of jewelled gold.

And since this communion of the soul with the Divine was to be no mere isolated event,

but its normal attitude, the whole life had to be altered and raised to the level of the times specially set apart for worship. All days were the Lord's days, and all life His. He gives His Light freely to all men, and the children of the Light must not yield to the false conventions and the pagan organisations of society which tend against the realisation of human brotherhood. So dishonesty and ill-will to our fellow-men must be banished from our lives as we submit ourselves to the Light of Christ, the spirit of war replaced by the spirit of peace, and the spirit of falsehood by the Spirit of Truth which will not suffer us to have a twofold standard, one for Sundays, and for what we swear to as in God's presence, and the other for week-days and our ordinary intercourse with men, from which all thought of God is far removed. The relationship of Christian to Christian within the Church is not to be harshly opposed to the Christian's relations with those outside, for the life of the Church is but the earnest and foretaste of the life that shall some day reign throughout all the world.

Christ's light shines in every soul and the whole life must be submitted freely to His guidance. As the love of God goes out to

every man, all the world over, as He cares for all, however poor and bad and wretched, so those who are called by the name of Christ must let the same all-embracing love enter their whole lives. Friends to the truth must be friends to all men. Such was the programme of Christianity as conceived by the early Quakers.

## IV

### *THE GROWTH OF THE NEW MOVEMENT*

THE years 1653 to 1656 were above all others those of the great outburst of Quaker missionary activity which carried the movement all over England and across the seas to America. From this point the history of Quakerism must be concerned with many other lives than that of Fox, although he still remains the dominating figure around whose story we can more fittingly group some glimpses of his co-workers.

From the dales and fells and from the countrysides of the North went out a band of preachers whose names are hardly known to the historian, but whose lives and teaching had the deepest influence on seventeenth-century England. Simple yeomen most of them, whose message came more strongly through the spoken word than the written



page; men whose writings make difficult reading after two centuries and a half of time, but of whose spirit we can in some measure get glimpses in the brief spiritual autobiographies which not a few left behind them, and in the "testimonies" which their friends published after their death to bear witness to the truth for which they had lived.

At the commencement of the eighteenth century a systematic attempt was made to collect from the survivors of the early days some record of the men who first brought the Quaker message to the different parts of the country, and the Friends' Historical Society is now publishing the manuscript collection of replies which the different Quarterly Meetings throughout England sent in response to the request of the Yearly Meeting. This collection of *The First Publishers of Truth*, as it was called, gives most interesting evidence of the way in which comparatively unknown men were the means by which the new gospel spread from town to town. In some cases they would speak at the market-cross, or in the parish church, but frequently they seem to have gone to some meeting of Independents or Baptists where there was greater freedom of prophesying, and where

the minds of the hearers were more open to receive fresh views of truth. The collection is all too succinct, but here and there the writers give a glimpse of how the message came.

Thus at Leominster we read:<sup>1</sup> "In or about the year 1655 came a servant of the Lord, but a stranger outwardly, called Thomas Parrish, but of what parts no account can be given now, into a meeting of the people called Independents, who were met on the first day of the week at the house of Colonel James, at Tripleton. And after some time he had waited on the Lord in spirit, he had an opportunity to speak, all being silent; he said by way of exhortation, 'Keep to the Lord's watch.' These words, being spake in the power of God, had its operation upon all or most of the meeting, so that they felt some great dread and fear upon their spirits, and being silent for some space of time, some thought to have spake as usually to the meeting but could not because of the unusual awe that was on their spirits; so after a little time he spake again saying, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch.' Then [he] was silent again a little time, but the whole meeting, being

<sup>1</sup> *The First Publishers of Truth*, pp. 115, 116.

sensible that this man was in some extraordinary spirit and power, were all musing what manner of teaching this should be, being such a voice that most of the hearers never heard before, that carried such great authority with it that they were all necessitated to be subject to the power, though it was a great cross to their wills to sit in silence, though it was but a little time. Then he spake again these words, or to this purpose, 'Where are your minds now? wandering abroad? Or in the spirit, watching with the Lord?' Then he went on and opened the great mystery of God's salvation, turning their minds to the spirit of Christ, by which some of them knew he spake the truth, in the inward parts, which was the Light that shined in their hearts. Then one in the meeting, whose heart God had opened, bare this testimony to the truth, saying that he blessed God that he had heard the voice of His Spirit that day, though he knew not the man outwardly, nor what religion he professed. . . ."

Reader still was the welcome given to the new preachers by such companies of seekers as Charles Marshall describes in his Journal, when he was a lad of seventeen in Bristol: "And in those times which was about the

year 1654 there were many which were seeking after the Lord; and there were a few of us that kept one day of the week in fasting and prayer, so that when this day came we met together early in the morning not tasting anything, and sat down sometimes in silence; and as any found a concern on their spirits and inclination in their hearts they knelt down and sought the Lord; so that sometimes before the day ended there might be twenty of us might pray; men and women, and sometimes children spake a few words in prayer: and we were sometimes greatly bowed and broken before the Lord, in humility and tenderness. And unto one of these meetings, in the year 1654, came dearly beloved John Audland and John Camm, Messengers of the Everlasting God. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

These two ministers were those convinced in 1652 through the ministry of George Fox, at Firbank Chapel in Westmorland; they were neighbours and close friends in their new labours, travelling up together to interview the Protector on behalf of the persecuted Quakers, and later journeying to Bristol, which became the centre of their field of ministry. John Audland, though younger by twenty

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, *Sion's Travellers Comforted*, 1704, 8vo.

years than his friend, had already achieved reputation as an eloquent preacher in his county at the time of his convincement, and had then to go through an experience very like that which befell the great mystic, Tauler, three hundred years before. For a time he felt only his own helplessness, but after some weeks of deep sadness the power which had touched his life found utterance, and thenceforth he devoted himself to the work of the ministry ungrudgingly; the two friends did indeed give their lives to the work, and in 1656, John Camm, who was naturally weak in body, died, spent with the toil of travel and open-air preaching, but with a heart at rest and full of joy. John Audland continued his labours, undergoing repeated imprisonments and ill-usage, and dying in 1664, when little more than thirty-four years old. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is of interest to note that it was in connection with the introduction of Quakerism in Bristol that the curious belief arose that the Quakers were Roman Catholic emissaries in disguise; a misrepresentation which for two generations did not wholly disappear. An affidavit was even made that Franciscan friars from Rome had been recognised preaching in the Friends' Meetings. An amusing attack upon them based upon this will be found in William Prynne's "The Quakers unmasked and clearly detected to be

In 1652 and the years that followed we must picture a like work as proceeding in almost every part of the country. In the Eastern Counties the North Country yeoman, Richard Hubberthorne, was followed by his fellow-countryman, George Whitehead, and both were imprisoned in Norwich Jail. In this case very different lives of service awaited the two preachers. Hubberthorne was cast into Newgate in 1662 by Alderman Sir Richard Brown, and was one of the many victims who died in that overcrowded and pestilent spot; yet in such peace of soul that it is recorded "that it was not remembered that he groaned all the time of his sickness."<sup>1</sup> A striking picture of the man—"Dear, innocent Richard," as George Fox called him—is given by his fellow-prisoner, Edward Burrough. "He was but little in stature in his outward man, and of weak constitution of body, and was slow of speech and often more ready to hear than to speak; he made little appearances in the manhood of excellency or authority, but was contemptible among men, yet he was very wise

but the spawn of Romish frogs, Jesuites and Franciscan Freers; sent from Rome to seduce the intoxicated, giddy-pated English nation," 1654, 4to.

<sup>1</sup> *Piety Promoted*, vol. 1. p. 50, ed. 1723.

and knew his season when to speak and when to be silent . . . and his ministry was often savoury and seasonable and felt in the pure life, though his words were plain and homely.”<sup>1</sup>

It was the lot of George Whitehead to live through all the persecutions of the Commonwealth and Restoration, sharing in the troubles that overtook the Friends so fully that for a long time during the reign of Charles II. he was accustomed never to go to meeting without a nightcap in his pocket, as never knowing whether the conventicle might not be broken up and himself lodged in jail. After the death of Fox he became almost the most prominent of the Quaker leaders, and lived to present an address to George I. in the name of the Society long after most of the Friends of his early days had passed away, dying peacefully, after a full life of service, in 1723.

While these Friends were active in the East of England, Thomas Holmes journeyed into Wales, Miles Halhead into Scotland, and afterwards, in company with Thomas Salthouse, into Devon and Cornwall, while a number of preachers travelled through the various parts of Yorkshire.

<sup>1</sup> A collection of the several books . . . of R. Hubberthorne, 1663, 4to.

Some idea of the intense earnestness of their mission may be gathered from the words of a convert who afterwards shared in their labours. Thomas Thomson tells us how at Christmastide in 1652, Thomas Stubbs and William Dewsbury parted from each other to go to the different parts to which they felt drawn. "We sat down and were in prayer and supplication to the Lord much of the day, William labouring to strengthen Thomas and encourage him in the exercise and service for the Lord till about the third hour in the afternoon; so the day being far spent Thomas took leave and departed towards Beverley. Then William and I made ready for our journey towards Malton; but William's care and travel being great for the prosperity of Sion, we got not to our Friends there till after the setting of the sun; then having twelve or thirteen miles to go, we set forwards, and many times run upon the wolds; and it being a clear, moonshine night we got to Malton about the eighth or ninth hour of the night. There we found brethren and Friends assembled in the house of Robert Hebden, Richard Farnsworth (another travelling Friend in the ministry) being there with them; so we



were greatly comforted and refreshed in the love of God with our friends that night." <sup>1</sup>

These men lived indeed in the spirit of prayer, and one cannot altogether wonder at such a scene as the same writer goes on to describe when in 1656 John Whitehead held for the first time a Friends' meeting at Hunvanby (now Hunmanby) on the Wolds. The roughs of the village threw stones at the people who came together in the little close where the meeting was to be held, so that they withdrew into a barn for quiet. There John Whitehead spoke with power, but presently the angry crowd without burst into the room raging and cursing. The Friends present stood close around the preacher, who continued unmoved. One after another those who stood between him and the mob were dragged and thrust away until, as they were close to him, the intruders suddenly stopped still, turned their backs and left the room. Quiet fell upon the little gathering, and after a time of silent prayer the preacher spoke again, and the first Quaker meeting in Hunmanby closed in a sense of the power of the Divine presence over all.

It is difficult to describe the early years of

<sup>1</sup> T. Thomson's testimony in *The Written Gospel Labours of John Whitehead*, London, 1704, 8vo.

the Society of Friends apart from the story of individual lives, but one realises how independent the Quaker movement was of the machinery of organised leadership, and how deep in the life of the people was the need which it met, as one reads such a story as that of the convincement of the sailor, Thomas Lurting. He was boatswain's mate on one of Blake's men-of-war, and tells us in his autobiography how a soldier who had been at a meeting in Scotland first brought news of the Quakers' teaching to his ship; though this man stayed but a short time with them, after some six months' time one or two of the crew began to meet in silence together for worship instead of coming to hear the chaplain, and gradually, in spite of punishments from the captain and persecution from their fellow sailors, one after another joined the little band. Equally remarkable was the way in which, quite without having any knowledge of a like trend of thought amongst the Quakers in England, these men, whom the captain had at length come to regard as the most daring and trustworthy fighters on his ship, came almost all at once to realise that they could no longer endeavour to take the lives of their fellow-men. The story of their heroism in remaining faithful to their

convictions, and of the later adventures of Lurting (in one of which he succeeded, when captured by Algerine pirates, in regaining command of his ship without a struggle, and in taking his revenge on his captors by landing them in safety in their own country), forms one of the most delightful narratives in the Quaker literature.<sup>1</sup>

It was not until 1654 that any attempt was made to preach the Quaker message in

**1654** London. Early in that year Isabel

Buttery and another woman came from the North and distributed in London a number of printed epistles by George Fox.

They were joined by Amor Stoddart (who had resigned his captain's commission in the army on becoming a Quaker) and by one or two others, and these were accustomed to hold private meetings at the houses of the brothers Dring in Watling Street and Moorfields, meetings held usually in silence, but at which sometimes a few words would be spoken by one of the women ministers.<sup>2</sup>

There was thus a little group of Friends already accustomed to meet together for worship and fellowship, when in the early

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Lurting, *The Fighting Sailor turn'd peaceable Christian*, 1711, 8vo.

<sup>2</sup> W. Crouch, *Posthuma Christiana*, 1712, pp. 12, 13.

summer Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough, two of the most remarkable of the early Quaker leaders, came to London in company with Richard Hubberthorne and several other Friends. One who was in London at the time tells how "there was a Report spread about the City that there was a sort of people come there that went by the name of plain North country ploughmen, who did differ in judgment to all other people in the City,"<sup>1</sup> and very soon they had difficulty in finding rooms adequate to meet the numbers that came to hear them, many simply curious, others more deeply desirous to seek the truth, wherever it might be found. In the meantime, on their first arrival, the Quaker preachers had paid repeated visits to various religious groups which were likely to be in sympathy with them. It was work which needed tact and wisdom and deep spiritual insight if the audience was to be reached. "Much wisdom," writes Anthony Pearson to George Fox (30th Fifth Month, 1654), "is to be used amongst them until the truth be clearly understood ; and then to speak to that in their consciences, to the raising up of the witness, to let them see themselves ; and then to pass judgment upon them, and so to

<sup>1</sup> *First Publishers of Truth*, p. 163.

keep them under from disputing and questioning. This we found the most profitable ministry ; and few words must be used : for they have the truth in notions, and all cry out, 'What do these men say more than others have said?' ; but to bring them to silence confounds their wisdom. Oh ! that none might come to London but those who are raised up into the life of Truth, who dwell in the loving power of God, whose words may have authority ; for there are so many mighty in wisdom to oppose and gainsay, that weak ones will suffer the Truth to be trampled on ; and there are so many rude, savage apprentices and young people and Ranters, that nothing but the power of the Lord can chain them. Dear heart, let none go to London but in the clear and pure movings of the Spirit of Life ; that the blessing may rest upon them. And great is the harvest like to be in that city ; hundreds are concerned, and thousands wait to see the issue, who have persuasion that it is the Truth. Very many societies we have visited, and are now able to stand : many honest hearts are among the waiters, and some that are joined to the Ranters are a pretty people." <sup>1</sup>

In a short time the little band of preachers

<sup>1</sup> *Letters, &c., of Early Friends*, 1841, p. 13.

separated to different parts of the country, with the exception of Howgill and Burrough, who still remained in the City. At the close of August, writing to Margaret Fell, they report that they "have three meetings or more every week, very large, more than any place will contain, and which we can conveniently meet in."<sup>1</sup> But to men so consumed with their message as were these, unexpected avenues of service were ever opening.

Such a scene as Sewel describes was but an instance of this. "At London there is a custom in summer time, when the evening approaches, and tradesmen leave off working, that many lusty fellows meet in the fields, to try their skill and strength in wrestling, when generally a multitude of people stands gazing in a round. Now it so fell out that E. Burrough past by the place when they were wrestling, and standing still among the spectators, saw how a strong and dexterous fellow had already thrown three others and was waiting for a fourth champion, if any durst venture into the lists. At length, none being bold enough to try, E. Burrough stept into the ring (commonly made up of all sorts of people) and having

<sup>1</sup> *Letters, &c., of Early Friends*, 1841, p. 16.

looked upon the wrestler with a serious countenance, the man was not a little surprised instead of an airy antagonist to meet with a grave and awful young man ; and all stood as it were amazed at this sight, eagerly expecting what would be the issue of this combat. But it was quite another fight E. Burrough aimed at. For having already fought against spiritual wickedness, that had once prevailed on him, and having overcome in measure, by the grace of God, he now endeavoured also to fight against it in others, and to turn them from the evil of their ways. With this intention he began very seriously to speak to the standers by, and that with such a heart-piercing power, that he was heard by this mixt multitude with no less attention than admiration ; for his speech tended to turn them from darkness to the light, and from the power of Satan to God." 1

The work of Lurrough and Howgill was so effective that they were able in the same year to leave London and pay a visit to Ireland, where they spent some months, visiting different parts of Munster, preaching as they went, till after various adventures they were arrested and brought under guard

W. Sewel, *History*, ed. 1795, vol. i. pp. 149, 150.

from Cork to Dublin, to be banished the country.<sup>1</sup>

From this time onwards there was very close intercourse between the Friends in England and their Irish comrades, and the development of the Society proceeded upon similar lines in both countries. The Irish Friends were almost entirely recruited from the Protestant settlers, so that difference of nationality did not so much affect the growth of the Quaker organisation as might otherwise have been the case.\*

Burrough and Howgill were banished from Ireland, but they had left an impression on the English settlers there which other preachers were not slow to follow up; indeed, on the very day on which they were banished

\* The Quaker message was first brought to Ireland in 1653 by William Edmundson, who had been convinced by George Fox in the North of England in that year, and subsequently went to join his brother, a Cromwellian soldier, quartered in Antrim. He moved soon afterwards to Lurgan, where the first Friends' meeting was established, but his public ministry did not begin until 1655, when he began to travel about in company with an English Friend, John Tiffin, and from that time onward led a life of most useful service, both in different parts of Ireland and in England, America, and the West Indies. See his *Journal* (Dublin, 1715, 4to).



Barbara Blaugdon, a woman of great courage, with remarkable gifts as a minister, landed in Dublin and, after an interview with Henry Cromwell, travelled through the South of Ireland to Cork, holding meetings and suffering repeated imprisonments. In the meantime the two friends returned to London, which for the remainder of their lives became the centre of their labours. Edward Burrough indeed went on missionary visits to Scotland, Dunkirk, and elsewhere, but for both the absorbing work of their lives lay henceforth in London and its immediate neighbourhood.

Within about six months of their first arrival in London the numbers of their friends had so grown that they were able to arrange to rent a large meeting-house at the sign of the "Bull and Mouth" in Aldersgate Street for public gatherings, while small private meetings were held in some thirty houses. At first, the work of organisation must have lain heavily upon them, but after some two years' time, as Burrough wrote to George Fox, he and Francis Howgill were "wholly given up to the work of the ministry," and the needful organisation and care of the poor was undertaken by a fortnightly meeting of the more experienced

men Friends, from which none who cared to attend were excluded.<sup>1</sup>

Those who would gather some idea of the growth of the Quaker Society in London in these early days will find a lively picture from the pen of an eye-witness in the *Posthuma Christiana* of William Crouch. He speaks of Burrough and Howgill as "the apostles of this city in their day," and bears strong witness to the peculiar power of Edward Burrough as a minister. "At the 'Bull and Mouth,' when the room, which was very large, hath been filled with people, many of whom have been in uproar, contending with one another, some exclaiming against the Quakers, accusing and charging them with heresie, blasphemy, sedition, and what not, that they were deceivers and deluded the people, that they denied the Holy Scriptures and the Resurrection, others endeavouring to vindicate them and speaking of them more favourably, in the midst of all which noise and contention this servant of

<sup>1</sup> See W. Beck and T. F. Ball, *The London Friends' Meetings*, 1869, 8vo, p. 24 and p. 85 seq. The "Two Weeks' Meeting" continued to exist until 1789 for the care of marriages, but its other duties were undertaken from 1671 onwards by the Monthly Meeting.

the Lord hath stood upon a bench with his Bible in his hand—for he generally carried one about with him—speaking to the people with great authority from the words of John vii. 12: ‘And there was much murmuring among the people concerning Him’ (to wit, Jesus), ‘for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay, but He deceiveth the people.’ And so suitable to the present debate amongst them, that the whole multitude were overcome thereby and became exceeding calm and attentive, and departed peaceably, and with seeming satisfaction.”<sup>1</sup>

The power of Edward Burrough was that of a nature intensely religious and of a life wholly given up to the service to which he believed himself called of God. In the interesting preface which he wrote to George Fox’s *Great Mystery . . . Unfolded* he alludes with simple modesty to his own experience as one of those who from the strictest Puritanism had turned to Quakerism. “Such we were (to say no more of us) that sought the Lord, and desired the knowledge of His ways more than anything beside, and for one I may speak, who from a child even a few years old, he set his face to seek and find the Saviour, and more than

<sup>1</sup> *Posthuma Christiana*, p. 26 seq.

life and treasure, or any mortal crown sought after with all his heart the one thing that is needful, to wit, the knowledge of God."

Of such a spirit was Edward Burrough, a man, as his friend Howgill wrote, whose "very strength was bended after God," and to whose attractive power the Journal of Thomas Ellwood still bears witness. His life of service was fittingly crowned by its close, which was indeed a martyr's death. It was after the Restoration and in the first flush of persecution which succeeded the brief interval of half-hearted toleration that he learned when in Bristol that the storm had broken upon his beloved Friends. "I am going up to the City of London," he said, "to suffer among Friends in that place."

Soon after his return he was arrested at the "Bull and Mouth" meeting and condemned by the Lord Mayor, Sir Richard  
1662 Brown, to Newgate. The jails of London were filled with Quakers, and Newgate was so crowded that there was not room for many of the Friends to sleep upon the ground. Rough usage and foul air soon told and one after another sickened and died. When after some four months Edward Burrough fell ill a special effort was made to obtain his removal from the dungeon, and an

order for his release was obtained from the King, but Brown was determined not to let his prisoner go, and put obstacles in the way. As Burrough lay dying he prayed for his persecutor, and on the morning before his death he is recorded to have said, "Now my soul and spirit is centred into its own being with God, and this form of person must return from whence it was taken."<sup>1</sup> He was but twenty-eight years of age at his death, but so deeply did his whole life impress his friends that when in 1666 they collected and published his writings the title-page spoke of him as "that true prophet and faithful servant of God."

<sup>1</sup> J. Besse, *Sufferings*, 1753, 4to, vol. i. p. 389, and *cf.* *Piety Promoted*, vol. i. p. 56.

## V

### *TROUBLES WITHOUT AND WITHIN*

WE have seen how, in 1652, George Fox had found at Swarthmore a centre for his work, and in the two succeeding years he journeyed up and down in the North-west of England, intent upon his message. At Ulverstone, and again at Walney Island, he was clubbed and stoned and knocked senseless by the crowd; in Cumberland he found in many places an eager reception for his words.

But at Carlisle, where the garrison had assembled with beat of drum to hear him preach, there was sharp division of feeling amongst the townspeople about him, and after a scene of confusion in one of the churches a warrant was issued against him. Hearing of this, Fox delivered himself up to the magistrates, and was committed to prison

for blasphemy and heresy. He was threatened with death, but some technical difficulty stood in the way of his being tried at the Assizes, and the judges left him to the local magistrates to deal with. He was put by them, without trial, into the common dungeon, "among the moss-troopers, thieves, and murderers"—a verminous and filthy place,

**1653-54** where Fox was kept for months, ill-used by the jailers, but beloved by his fellow-prisoners. Among those who came to see the man who, as it was rumoured, was to be put to death for his belief, was a lad of sixteen, James Parnell by name. He was convinced of the truth of the cause for which the prisoner was suffering, and became in turn one of its earliest martyrs. His parents were people of means, who had given him a good education, but on his returning home to Retford as a Quaker he was disowned by them. But though small of stature and so young in years, Parnell seems to have had remarkable gifts as a minister, and courage undaunted. Leaving his friends, he went forth as a Quaker preacher to bear the brunt of the persecution which was now growing with the increasing prejudice aroused by the new teaching.

In Pluntingsdonshire, at Cambridge (where

he disputed with the scholars, and was imprisoned), and in Essex, he was the first to bring the Quaker message, and in the latter county he was the means of convincing a very large number, among them Stephen Crisp, of Colchester, who afterwards became one of the most eminent of Quaker ministers.

Meanwhile opposition to the heresy increased. Parnell had often to suffer for the part he played, though his gentle spirit is witnessed by the way in which he bore persecution. As he came out of St. Nicholas's Church, Colchester, a man struck him a fierce blow with a heavy stick, saying, "There, take that for Christ's sake!" to which he quietly answered, "Friend, I do receive it for Jesus Christ's sake."<sup>1</sup> In the summer of 1655 the Independents at Coggeshall had appointed a fast "to pray against the errors of the people called Quakers," in the parish church. Parnell went

**1655** there, and on the conclusion of the minister's sermon spoke on behalf of the heretics. Various ministers argued with him, and one, after accusing him of falsehood and slander, went on, without leaving an opportunity for reply, to offer up a prayer. Upon this Parnell did not remove his hat (which it

<sup>1</sup> Sewel, vol. i. p. 196.



was customary then to wear in church except during vocal prayer), and when the magistrates bade him put it off he refused, and went out of the church. One of the magistrates presently followed him, and he was committed to the common jail at Colchester, and eventually taken, as one of a chained gang of felons, to the Assizes at Chelmsford. The jury were unwilling to find him guilty of anything but the authorship of a paper in which he had answered his *mittimus*, but the judge was determined that he should be made an example of, and fined him £40 "for contempt of the magistracy and ministry." He was sent back to prison in Colchester Castle, where his friends were forbidden access to him. The jailer and his wife used to beat him, he was robbed of the food his friends brought, and forced to lie on the cold stones, instead of on the bed which they would have provided for him. At length he was compelled to live in a hole in the wall some twelve feet above the ground. His friends wished to provide a cord and basket, by which he might draw up his food, but the jailer would not permit it, and he had to clamber down the wall by the aid of a rope to the ladder, which only reached half the distance. He grew stiff and weak from

living in this damp cell, and one day as he tried to climb back with his food, and clutched at the rope, he slipped and fell, bruising himself and cutting his head severely upon the stones beneath. He was taken up for dead, but on his coming round he was forced into another hole in the wall, lower down than the first and smaller, known as "the Oven." It had a door but no windows, and they would not let him leave it to take a little air, or even permit him exercise in the prison yard. Friends who offered bail for him and were willing to be imprisoned in his stead until he should recover, were refused their request by the magistrate; but as the prisoner drew near his end, after an imprisonment of some ten or eleven months, one or two Quakers were allowed to visit him. He himself looked gladly forward to death. "Don't hold me, but let me go," he said. "Will you hold me?" "No, dear heart, we will not hold thee," was the rejoinder of the good woman Friend who, with her husband, was watching beside him; and after a little slumber death set him free.

In the meantime the imprisonment of Fox in Carlisle Jail had come to an end. It was reported to Parliament (the famous "Little Parliament" of Praisegod Barebones) "that a

young man at Carlisle was to die for religion,"<sup>1</sup> and in consequence apparently of its action in communicating with the magistrates and sheriffs Fox was shortly afterwards released, and at once continued his work of preaching, travelling through Durham, Northumberland, and Yorkshire. In 1654 he revisited his own country in the Midlands, and at Swannington, in Leicestershire, a "general meeting" was held, to which the leading Quaker preachers from Bristol, London, and other parts also came.

The attention of the authorities must have been drawn to this gathering as proof of

**1654** some sort of national organisation amongst these Quakers, of whom so much ill was spoken, and not long afterwards Fox was arrested by Colonel Hacker, the regicide, and sent up in charge of one of his captains to London to the Protector, under suspicion of being concerned in a Royalist plot.

It was no difficult thing for Fox to show to Cromwell that his aim was to bring people "from the causes of war and fighting," and that he was opposed to taking up arms either against the Protector or any other man. As Fox turned to leave Oliver's presence, he

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. p. 174.

caught him by the hand and said, with tears in his eyes, "Come again to my house, for if thou and I were but an hour a day together, we should be nearer one to the other."<sup>1</sup> The Quaker leader left Whitehall a free man once more, but though Cromwell himself was inclined towards toleration, the temper of the party upon whose support his Government relied was very different, and the persecution still went on, the Presbyterian and independent clergy being annoyed not only by the doctrines of Quakerism, but also by the sturdy refusal of the Friends to contribute by payment of tithes towards the compulsory maintenance of a professional ministry. After travelling through the Eastern Counties, and the Western Midlands, Fox had passed into Cornwall, and at St. Ives he was arrested and taken to Launceston, where, at the Assizes, his captor, Major Ceely, accused him of a plot to bring in King Charles by force of arms. The charge utterly broke down, but Fox and his two companions were fined twenty marks each for not removing their hats in court, and sentenced to be kept in prison until the fine should be paid.

As they had now to prepare for a long

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. p. 211.

imprisonment they discontinued the fees for maintenance which they had been giving to the jailer, and in consequence were thrust into the loathsome dungeon of "Doomsdale," where the condemned murderers were kept, and many prisoners had died—a place so foul and unhealthy that it was said that "few that went in ever came out again in health." After some considerable time, the prisoners were allowed by Quarter Sessions to cleanse their dungeon, which had not been done for many years. While they continued in prison their teaching continued to spread, and the magistrates of the Exeter Quarter Sessions were induced to issue a warrant for apprehending all Quakers, and many other Friends were arrested and imprisoned. But in the meantime protests and appeals had been made to the Protector, and Major-General Desborough was ordered to release the prisoners at Launceston. In the early autumn they were set free again, after more than half a year's imprisonment, and Fox was able to continue his travels. But there lay before him a trouble greater than that of persecution, a moment of crisis for the new movement which was to have the most far-reaching effect upon its inner life.

There can be no doubt that wave of intense enthusiasm which spread over the country with the teaching of the first Quaker preachers carried with it a number of minds naturally susceptible to excitement and liable to strange and one-sided conceptions of truth and duty. Here and there a Quaker would follow the example of one of the old Hebrew prophets to call attention to his message: there are a number of cases in which preachers appeared in sackcloth or in a penance sheet of white, and even one or two in which they appeared stript, or almost stript, of their clothing, "for a sign" to the people. Such acts, though they gave offence, may be paralleled by similar ones in the case of other great religious movements, and may, to some extent, be explained by the way in which the thoughts and imagery of the Old Testament writers reacted upon the men of Puritan England. But incidents like these, although they were the outcome of Quaker enthusiasm, were after all external to the real life of the movement, and became rarer as it gathered strength. The danger which Fox had now to face lay deeper, and one who had been most closely associated with him in his work hitherto was to be connected with it. James Nayler was one of the most remarkable

of the yeomen preachers who followed the example of Fox and gave themselves up without reserve to an arduous life of travelling ministry. Almost since the year of his convincement in 1651, Nayler had left his wife and family at Wakefield to travel about as a Quaker preacher, at first in the North, and later in the South and West. A man of no great education, looking, as Ellwood tells us, "but like a plain, simple countryman, having the appearance of a husbandman or shepherd,"<sup>1</sup> he possessed considerable natural abilities, and had risen, while serving with the army, to be quartermaster under General Lambert, who bore witness in Parliament to the honourable position which he filled, until, in consequence of ill-health, he left the army. His decision to follow the example of Fox involved him in excommunication, and entailed a life of continual hardships. He suffered beatings and imprisonment, and, like Fox, employed his moments of leisure in writing pamphlets full of burning enthusiasm for the cause of Quakerism. He possessed, too, a personal charm which strongly attracted many to him, and this was, perhaps, heightened by an ascetic tendency which led him to undergo prolonged fastings which left

<sup>1</sup> *The History of Thomas Ellwood*, edn. 1900, p. 13.

him weak in body and liable to nervous excitement. Unfortunately he was not equally proof against the admiration which his great powers aroused amongst many of his hearers.

The first sign of any difficulty arose not long after the coming of the northern preachers to London. Amid the multitude of new converts there were some whose spirit and ideas were really those of the Ranters, enthusiasts eager to dispute, and carried away by their imagination. Among them were some women, who troubled the Friends' meetings by disputes with Burrough and Howgill, and who appealed from their rebukes to Nayler. His kindness of heart, perhaps, led him astray into giving them some tacit support, and eventually a group of these people gathered about him, flattering him by their admiration of his power as a preacher and gradually bringing about a silent estrangement between him and his fellow-workers. It was under these influences that the very truth which Nayler had been so long proclaiming began to be distorted in his followers' minds into a grievous error. Conscious of the reality of the presence of the Divine revelation, the indwelling Christ, in his heart, he seems to have lacked that



personal humility which with Fox and the other Quaker leaders prevented them from claiming any place of privilege apart from other men. He allowed his followers to do honour to him under the supposition that they were honouring not himself but the Spirit of Christ revealed in him. His friends in prison learned with deep sadness of the way in which Nayler allowed this delusion place, permitting his followers to bow and even kneel to him.

On his journey back from Launceston, George Fox came upon Nayler and his company imprisoned in Exeter Jail. He endeavoured in vain to convince them of their error, and held a meeting with them in the prison, but they were not able to stay through this ordeal. Next day Fox spoke earnestly to his former comrade, but all without avail, and he had to turn from his proffered kiss of friendship, "since he had turned, against the power of God."<sup>1</sup>

When they were released shortly afterwards from prison, Nayler and six of his followers went to Bristol. On the way his companions imitated the behaviour of Christ's disciples at His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, throwing their scarfs in front of him

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. p. 328.

and singing as they went. It was raining and the streets lay deep in mud as they entered Bristol, a man walking in front bareheaded, and Nayler following on horseback, with women walking beside him singing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts, Hosannah in the highest." The strange scene did not pass unobserved, and the magistrates promptly arrested the misguided folk, and sent them up to London to be tried

1656

by Parliament, which had but recently met. • A committee of the House of Commons took many days to examine Nayler, and the House itself debated his case at great length.

In reply to the question, "Art thou the only Son of God?" he said, "I am the Son of God, but I have many brethren," and at the close, "I do abhor that any of that honour which is due to God, should be given to me, as I am a creature; but it pleased the Lord to set me up as a sign of the coming of the Righteous One. . . ." Apparently even under the cloud which rested over him he had never identified himself with Christ. After a dozen discussions the House at last found him "guilty of horrid blasphemy," and "a grand impostor and seducer of the people." Barely escaping sentence of death, he was condemned

to be twice pilloried, to be whipped through the streets of London, bored through the tongue with a hot iron, and branded on the forehead with the letter B. Then after a public exposure and whipping at Bristol, he was to be imprisoned during the pleasure of Parliament. The cruel sentence, against which Cromwell expressed to the House his strong disapproval, was carried out remorselessly, in spite of a public petition and other expressions of popular protest. The occasion was eagerly seized by many of the Puritan leaders to make a general attack upon the Quakers, who, in spite of their having expressed their strong disapproval of Nayler and his companions long before this, were readily identified with them by their opponents. The Swarthmore MSS. contain copies of letters written by Fox to Nayler previous to his arrest, which show how completely he realised the serious nature of his conduct, both in itself and in its effect on public opinion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "James, thou must bear thy own burden and thy company's with thee, whose iniquity doth increase, and by thee is not cried against. Thou hast satisfied the world, yea their desires which they looked for, thou and thy disciples, and the world is joined against the truth : it is manifest through your wilful-

During the years of his imprisonment Nayler at length returned to his right mind completely, and wrote an earnest and humble acknowledgment of his error and of his gratitude to the Divine love which had compassion upon him. He was supported through his terrible punishment by the sympathy and care of not a few of his former Quaker friends, and now in his penitence there were two especially to whom his thoughts turned in his desire for full unity with his old companions. In 1658 we find him writing to Margaret Fell: "Dear Sister, beloved of God, I am often with thee, and have seen thee as thou art to me, and have heard thy voice as if present with thee, and sometimes have been refreshed therewith in the time of heavy burthens . . . but truly for the hardness and irrecon-

ness and stubbornness, and this is the word of the Lord God to thee."

[From a letter found upon Nayler when he was examined.]

"And James, it will be harder for thee to get down thy rude company than it was for thee to set them up (if ever thou come to know and own Christ) whose impudence doth sport and blaspheme the truth.'\*

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\* Swarthmore MSS., 1653, 1653.

cileableness which is in some, I am astonished and shaken, lest the Spirit of Christ Jesus should be grieved and depart, for if I know anything of it or ever have done, that is it which naturall[y] inclines to mercy and forgiveness, and not to bind"one another under a trespass till the uttermost farthen ; though this may be just and I do not condemn it, yet I have felt a spirit which delights more in forgiving debts and seeks all occasion thereto, even where it is not sought to, but seeks ; and by this spirit I have been able to bear all things while it is with me, else had I not been at this day. So that I complain not as to myself in what I here write, God knows, but *my* fear is of the provoking the justice of God without mercy, through not showing mercy one to another. . . . Dear friend, thou mayest feel my heart by what I have written to thee, which I fear to do to others. . . . So to the wisdom of Christ Jesus I commit thee therein, whose Spirit is simple and harmless toward fools and babes." <sup>1</sup>

We can well imagine how Margaret Fell would do her best to bridge the gulf between Nayler and her friends. And in this work of reconciliation a most helpful part was borne by William Dewsbury, perhaps the most

<sup>1</sup> Swarthmore MSS.

lovable of all the early Quaker leaders in his complete unselfishness and gentleness of spirit. Dewsbury seems to have come up to London in obedience to a deep sense of duty, and to have laboured earnestly to bring back those who had followed Nayler in the time of his aberration. To Nayler himself he wrote a letter of the kindest counsel and admonition, in which he showed to him his responsibility for the error of his followers. Finally, ere he left London, Dewsbury was able to bring about a meeting and complete reconciliation between George Fox, Burrough, and Howgill, and their old friend.<sup>1</sup>

The closing years of James Nayler's life were spent in complete unison with his fellows, and the terrible experience through which he had passed seems to have left behind it no trace of bitterness towards his enemies. In his suffering he had learned a great lesson, and henceforward gentleness and humility characterised his whole life. He was finally released from Bridewell by Parliament, in September, 1659, and proceeded to Bristol, where his public confession of his error and earnest appeal to his hearers brought tears to the listeners' eyes.

<sup>1</sup> Edward Smith, *The Life of William Dewsbury*, 1836, 8vo, pp. 145-148.

In the autumn of 1660 he left London to return to his wife and family in Yorkshire, but his strength was worn out by all the trouble through which he had passed, and he was not to see his old home again. As he passed through Huntingdon a friend observed him as "in such an awful frame as if he had been redeemed from the earth, and a stranger on it, seeking a better country and inheritance."<sup>1</sup> He went on alone, and was found by a countryman towards evening lying in a field by the roadside. They took him to a Friend's house not far away, and there soon afterwards he died. About two hours before his death he spoke to those who were about him a few words which he seems to have wished to leave as his last message. To read them even now is to feel that he had not been through all the sad experience of his life in vain:—

"There is a spirit which I feel, that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end; its hope is to out-live all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations: as it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any

<sup>1</sup> Sewel, *History*, vol. i. p. 293.

other ; if it be betrayed it bears it, for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God ;—its crown is meekness, its life is everlasting love unfeigned, and takes its kingdom with entreaty and not with contention, and keeps it by lowliness of mind : in God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life : it is conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it ; nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression : it never rejoiceth but through sufferings ; for with the world's joy it is murdered : I found it alone, being forsaken ; I have fellowship therein with them who lived in dens and desolate places in the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection and eternal holy life.”<sup>1</sup>

It has been seen how deeply stirred George Fox and his friends were by the aberration of Nayler and his companions. There can be little doubt indeed that their example exercised a very marked influence upon the Quakers, and as the years passed by we note that while Fox was as earnest as ever in his testimony to the Divine Light in the hearts of all men, he felt increasingly the need of a corporate expression of the relationship in which believers stood to each other, the

<sup>1</sup> Sewel's *History*, vol. i. p. 293.



danger of individual liberty being turned to wild and unbalanced licence. He was no theologian, and when he wished to remove the false impressions of his aims which were spread abroad by his opponents long after the death of Nayler, he expressed his consciousness of unity with historic Christianity in language not unlike that of the creeds of the orthodox Churches. At various times before the close of the seventeenth century the Friends found it desirable to remove misconceptions by publishing similar declarations of their belief, though these never took the form of a creed to which every member of their Society was expected to subscribe. Probably the best known of these expressions of belief is the letter of George Fox to the Governor of Barbadoes, written in 1671 and frequently reprinted.

Such writings contain an expression of truths of vital importance, yet they represent very imperfectly what was the real strength of the Quaker movement. Fox was not a methodical thinker, but he was a man whose whole life was dominated by his vision of the Unseen, and controlled by his conviction of a real communion between the human and the Divine. This was an experience and a faith which his fellow-preachers shared and which made the early Quakers what they were.

## VI

### *THE CROWN OF PERSECUTION*

WHEN Cromwell's second Parliament passed its cruel sentence upon James Nayler the door was opened to a general outburst of persecution against the Quakers ; country members appealed to the House of Commons to frame some measure against this dangerous and seditious sect, and magistrates and judges vied in their zeal to make examples of the troublesome heretics. Some were punished for breaking the Sabbath, others for non-payment of tithes ; often a refusal to take off the hat, was treated as contempt of court, and the law against vagrants was applied with vigour to travelling preachers. Thus, in spite of the limited toleration which was proclaimed by Cromwell's Instrument of Government, there were at one time over a thousand Quakers in prison under his rule. Fox, Burrough,

Thomas Aldam and other Friends on more than one occasion endeavoured to lay before the Protector the iniquity of this persecution, but without effecting any permanent change of policy. Although during the three last years of the Commonwealth Fox was able to travel about preaching in Wales and in Scotland without suffering the hardships he underwent in his earlier journeys, there were still many Friends in prison, and petition was made to Parliament in 1659 for the release of 144 such sufferers for conscience sake, but in vain. Strong, however, as was the opposition to the Quakers amongst the Puritans in Britain, it was in New England that the spirit of intolerance found fullest expression. The successors of the Pilgrim Fathers had forgotten all too soon the beautiful parting sermon that John Robinson addressed to his people at Leiden ere they set sail for America. Already Roger Williams had been rewarded by banishment for his tolerant spirit, which had led him to protest against the law by which all colonists were compelled to attend public worship on Sundays, and in 1637 Anne Hutchinson and her followers were exiled from Massachusetts. Subsequently, too, numbers of Anabaptists were punished by

the colonists by whippings and banishment. The law confined the franchise to members of the Independent Churches, and every endeavour was made by ministers and magistrates to guard the privileges which they had left their English homes to gain. Thus it may be imagined that no kindly welcome awaited the arrival of the first Quaker preachers in New England, especially since these were two women—Mary Fisher and Anne Austin.

**1656** On their reaching Boston they were detained on shipboard by order of the Deputy-Governor and their luggage was searched. A large number of Quaker books were taken from them and burned by the common executioner, they themselves were stripped and examined to see if marks of witchcraft could be found upon them, and finally, after some five weeks in jail, were banished by order of the Council to Barbadoes.

Shortly after their deportation another ship arrived in Boston harbour bringing eight other Quaker missionaries. Their chests were promptly searched for "erroneous books and hellish pamphlets," and the men and women brought before the court, which was then in session. After two days' examination, sentence of banishment was pronounced

against them, and their<sup>t</sup> ship's captain was compelled to take them back to England. The Boston authorities were now thoroughly alarmed, and, after consultation with the Commissioners of the United Provinces, a law was passed enforcing a penalty of £100 upon any ship's master who knowingly brought in any Quaker; such Quakers, after being whipped and imprisoned with hard labour, were to be deported at the earliest opportunity. Fines were also to be levied on any who concealed or dispersed Quaker books or defended their opinions.

The law was publicly proclaimed by beat of drum in the streets of Boston. A kindly disposed citizen, Nicholas Upshall, who (though not permitted by the jailer to speak to the prisoners) had previously furnished Mary Fisher and Anne Austin with food while they lay in prison, was summoned to appear before the court "for having expressed his disapproval of the law against Quakers." He appeared before the magistrates and pleaded with them against their intolerance, but the only result was that they sentenced the old man to a fine of £20, and banishment within thirty days.

In the following year the authorities were equally merciless to two women who landed

at Boston, with no intention of preaching : one of them, Ann Burden, a poor widow who came to collect some debts due to her husband ; the other, Mary Dyer, returning from a journey to England to rejoin her husband in Long Island.

In the meantime Christopher Holder and five of the eight Friends already banished from Boston felt that it was still their duty to return and fulfil their message, and they were joined by five other Quaker ministers. There seemed, however, to be no way open by which they could reach their destination, in view of the heavy fine which any captain would incur who ventured to take them with him.

While they were in this difficulty there came to London a little craft, whose builder and owner was Robert Fowler, a Quaker minister of Bridlington. While building his ship he had felt that she was to have some special service, and on reaching London he came to open his heart on the matter to Gerard Roberts.

Robert Fowler had no experience of ocean navigation, and his vessel was a very small one, but it seemed clear that the opportunity they had desired was come, and the ten Quakers started on their perilous journey. The master's account of the voyage is still

preserved,<sup>1</sup> telling how the little ship *Woodhouse* crossed the Atlantic without the usual aids of navigation, amid dangers of capture from hostile cruisers and of wreckage upon unknown rocks. At times of doubt and difficulty the little band would meet together for worship, and the ship was steered in

1657 accordance with what was felt to be the Divine guidance, "regarding neither latitude nor longitude," until they came safely to land at Long Island, the very place which some of the travellers had felt drawn to visit. At New Amsterdam, after two months' voyage, the travellers divided into two parties, and presently separated over different parts of the country.

Mary Clark reached Boston alone, and there she was cruelly whipped and kept for three months in jail. Christopher Holder and John Copeland were banished from Martha's Vineyard (where the Indians, however, gave them welcome) and from Plymouth, and after being whipped in Boston till their flesh was all torn, they were left for three days in prison without food or drink. Presently another Friend shared

<sup>1</sup> MS. at Devonshire House, printed in J. Bowden's *History of the Society of Friends in America*, 1850, vol. i. p. 63, seq.

their fate, and the Governor ordered them "to be severely whipped twice a week," the number of lashes to be increased from fifteen by three lashes each time. A new law was passed to deal with Quakers who should return after banishment, prescribing ear-clipping, whipping, and finally boring of the tongue, in punishment for this offence. Popular sympathy, however, had now been aroused on behalf of the prisoners, in consequence of their repeated whippings, and they were discharged and banished.

Up and down New England the Quakers passed, and they and their converts were stripped and lashed in public and banished from place after place. Travelling was dangerous, and three ministers lost their lives by shipwreck; three of those who had returned to Boston, after having been condemned and scourged, had their right ears cut off, and were refused appeal to England. Only in Rhode Island and among the Indians on the mainland was there security for the hated heretics.

At length, in the autumn of 1658, upon a petition of the ministers, the legislature of Massachusetts passed (by a majority of one) a law to enable "every person or persons of the cursed sect of Quakers" not an inhabi-



tant of the jurisdiction to be apprehended without warrant, and after trial and conviction to be banished upon pain of death. Colonists were to be allowed a month's imprisonment, during which they might recant, and were then to incur the same penalty. In 1659 came the additional enactment that "all children and servants and others that for conscience sake cannot come to their meetings to worship, and have not estates in their hands to answer the fines, must be sold for slaves to Barbadoes or Virginia, or other remote parts."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of all persecution, however, the magistrates could not prevent the spread of the new movement, and from time to time Friends from England succeeded in entering the forbidden country. In 1659 the climax came. In this year William Robinson, one of the ten who came on the *Woodhouse*, and whose work hitherto had lain in Virginia, came to Rhode Island, where he met Marmaduke Stevenson and another Quaker who had recently landed from Barbadoes. There he learned of the persecution of Friends in Massachusetts. He was deeply stirred by the news, and, as he afterwards wrote to the magistrates before his execu-

<sup>1</sup> Bowden, vol. i. p. 165.

tion, one afternoon,<sup>1</sup> while he was walking from Newport, "the word of the Lord came expressly to me, filling me with life and power and heavenly love," constraining him to pass to the town of Boston, "my life to lay down in His will for the accomplishing of His service, . . . to which heavenly voice I presently yielded obedience, not questioning the Lord how He would bring the thing to pass, being [as] I was a child ; and obedience was demanded of me by the Lord, who filled me with living strength and power from His heavenly presence, which at that time did mightily overshadow me, and my life at that time did say Amen to what the Lord required of me, and had commanded me to do."<sup>1</sup>

Marmaduke Stevenson, who had left behind him in the East Riding a wife and children whom he dearly loved, felt that it was his duty to go with his friend and share his message and punishment. The two landed at Boston on a fast-day, and after the minister had ended his sermon they attempted to speak to the congregation, and were promptly committed to prison, along with two other Quakers, one of whom was Patience Scott, a child of eleven years, who had come some

<sup>1</sup> *Piety Promoted*, 1723, pt. i. p. 13, seq.

weeks before from Rhode Island to plead with the Boston zealots. They were presently joined by a fellow-prisoner, Mary Dyer, who had come from Rhode Island to visit and comfort them. All but the little child were sentenced by the court to banishment on pain of death, if they should be found within the jurisdiction after two days from their release.

Undeterred by this sentence, Robinson and Stevenson went out to Salem and held great meetings in the woods, since none dare receive them into their houses. Mary Dyer went back to Rhode Island, but not long afterwards felt it her duty to return to Boston. She visited some Friends who were in prison there, and shortly afterwards was arrested. A few days later Robinson and Stevenson, having finished the work which they felt they had to do in the country, entered Boston again. The undaunted men were accompanied by a little group of Quakers, men and women, one of whom brought with her linen, "to wrap the dead bodies of those who were to suffer." News of their approach had gone before them, and they were met by the constables and by a mocking crowd, taken before the magistrates, and committed again to jail.

At length the court met. The prisoners had broken the law, but even Endicott seems to have hesitated before pronouncing sentence ; but on the prisoners being remanded for a day, a fierce sermon was delivered by the minister whose duty it was to preach on the occasion of the public fast which fell then, urging the magistrates to remove the curse of the Quakers' presence from their country. The Governor's mind was now fixed, and the prisoners being brought into court again, he proceeded at once to pass sentence of death upon William Robinson, not even permitting him to read a paper he had prepared, giving the reasons which had led him to remain in the colony. Marmaduke Stevenson was sentenced next, and finally Mary Dyer. In the interval before the execution William Robinson preached through the prison window to the crowd which had flocked together. After another service, when the minister once more attacked the diabolical doctrines of the Quakers, an escort of two hundred soldiers took the prisoners out to the place where the gibbet stood. To prevent the people from hearing what they might say, the drums were beaten loudly close beside them. The three walked hand in hand, their faces full of joy. Mary Dyer

was an elderly woman, and the marshal scoffingly asked her whether she was not ashamed to walk thus hand in hand between two young men. "No," she made answer, "this is to me the greatest joy I could enjoy in this world." The two men spoke briefly to the people before they were hanged, and, despite the taunts of Wilson, the attendant minister, they died calmly and full of faith. As Mary Dyer stood bound and blindfolded upon the ladder, with the halter on her neck, a shout was raised that a reprieve had come, and she was taken down. Her son had succeeded in interceding for her.

They bade her come down, but she, as Sewel says, "whose mind was already in heaven, stood still, and said she was there willing to suffer as her brethren did, unless they would annul their wicked law." Then the officers pulled her down, and removed her to prison, whence she was before long carried under escort out of Boston. Robinson had left behind him two letters written shortly before his execution, filled with a wonderful joy and calm, and more than one of the spectators of the event were so impressed that they were willing to suffer the lash for siding with the Quakers.

Mary Dyer did not stay long in her home, but in the spring of 1660 felt it her duty to return and renew her protest. She was once more condemned, and this time the sentence was duly carried out, in spite of a most touching appeal to Endicott from her husband, who was a leading man in Rhode Island and not a Quaker. As she was about to suffer, one scoffingly said to her that she should have said she had been in paradise. "Yea, I have been in paradise these several days," she answered, and then the executioner did his work.

In the following year William Leddra was hanged, dying with a like calmness of faith.

**1661** A fourth Quaker was about to suffer, and many others were in prison when Endicott's hand was suddenly stayed by an order from Charles II. The first year of the Restoration was a time in which great expectations of toleration were general. The Act of Uniformity had not yet been passed, and men still had faith in the Declaration of Breda. When Edward Burrough went to lay before the king the sufferings of the New England Quakers, the good-natured monarch doubtless smiled as he consented to make one Samuel Shattock, a Quaker whom Endicott had already exiled,

his messenger to the Puritan Governor, bearing the royal mandamus that "now and henceforth all Quakers liable to death or other corporal punishment" should be sent to England for trial. Henceforth, though persecution in America was still anything but ended, the worst was passed, and it was in England that the Quakers were now to suffer in the largest numbers.

The toleration which Charles had promised did not last long. The rising of

**1661**

Venner and the Fifth Monarchy men in January, 1660-1, was made an excuse for a proclamation by which Anabaptists and Quakers, who were in no way connected with the Fifth Monarchists, were forbidden to meet together for worship, save in their own families or in the parish church. This was followed in May, 1662, by a special act against the Quakers, providing that all who maintained the unlawfulness of oaths, and all Quakers meeting for worship to the number of five or more, should be fined £5

**1662**

for the first offence, £10 for the second, and for the third be banished to the Plantations, with alternatives of three or six months' hard labour in place of the fines. The final punishment was thus even more severe than that to

which all Dissenters were subjected for a like offence on the passing of the Conventicle Act in 1664, for by that Act a fine of £100 was allowed as the alternative to transportation for seven years. In addition to these Acts advantage was taken of the cruel penal laws of Elizabeth and James I., which had been aimed originally against the Roman Catholics. Especially was this the case with the Act of 1605, under which Quakers refusing the oath of allegiance at quarter sessions now ran risk of a *præmunire*, by which they were outlawed and subject to perpetual imprisonment at the pleasure of the Crown, with loss of all their goods. Finally, in 1670, the Second Conventicle Act made the penalties against the meetings of Dissenters more stringent, in some respects, even than those of the Acts of 1664.

Soon after the Restoration, George Fox suffered imprisonment for some five months at Lancaster, from which he was freed through the intercession of Judge Fell's widow with the king, but it was in 1662 that the full brunt of persecution fell upon the Quakers, to continue, with but a few intervals of comparative relaxation, until the close of the reign of Charles II. Thomas Ellwood has vividly portrayed the terrible overcrowd-



ing of the prisoners in Newgate,<sup>1</sup> where in one room three tiers of hammocks were stretched one above the other from the centre pillar to the walls, while the sick and dying lay on pallet beds beneath. Twenty of the Newgate prisoners died in consequence of this treatment, and throughout the country the jails were crowded with Quakers. While under the Commonwealth 3,173 Friends had been put in prison, of whom 32 had died there, as many as 3,068 had been imprisoned in less than two years after the Restoration. We learn these details from a letter which Fox wrote to the king, pointing out how, in addition to these sufferings, the meetings of the Quakers were "daily broken up by men with clubs and arms."<sup>2</sup>

One after another the Quaker leaders of the early days were taken from their work by the zeal of the authorities. Hubberthorne and Burrough had died in Newgate in 1662; Francis Howgill, after an imprisonment of four and a half years for refusal to take the oath of allegiance, died in peace in Appleby Jail in 1668. Fox himself suffered, under circumstances of great hardship, prolonged

<sup>1</sup> *The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood*, 1900, 8vo, p. 107, seq.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, i. p. 522.

imprisonment, first at Lancaster in 1663, and then at Scarborough Castle, to which he had been transferred under escort. Here he was exposed to the weather and the spray of the waves, in a cheerless cell by the edge of the cliff, until, though his health was shattered by the repeated hardships of imprisonment, the very soldiers who had taken pleasure in trying to annoy him could not but express their wonder at his spirit ("he is as stiff as a tree and as pure as a bell, for we could never bow him," they said), and at length even the Roman Catholic Governor was won over from hostility to lifelong friendliness.

It is hardly possible, however, in recording some of the punishments which the Quaker leaders underwent, to realise the severity of the persecution through which a countless number of obscure men and women passed rather than be unfaithful to their ideals. On the 16th of January, 1664-65, there were ninety-nine Quakers in Newgate under sentence of transportation, one of whom was a shoemaker of Mile End, whose brief trial is recorded by Besse.<sup>1</sup> He had been taken at a meeting, and was asked by the justices where he dwelt. "I have a dwelling," he answered, 'where neither thief, murderer, nor persecutor

<sup>1</sup> *Sufferings*, vol. i. p. 404.

can come"; and being asked again where that was, he replied, "In God." He was sent to Bridewell as a vagabond; and making at the sessions a like reply to the question of the judge as to where his dwelling-place was, he was sentenced to be transported with three malefactors to Virginia, and there to be sold as a slave for seven years. Before the close of the month ninety-six more Quakers were brought into Newgate from their meetings, and at the end of the year twenty-five Friends amongst the Newgate prisoners had died as a result of the treatment they had received and the insanitary overcrowding of the jail. Nor was it in London and the large towns only that this went on, for in the same year there were as many as twenty-nine persons sentenced to transportation from the little town of Hertford alone, eight of them for being present at a silent meeting.<sup>1</sup>

Yet this persecution doubtless served to purify the Society of unworthy elements, and the manner in which the Quakers bore their sufferings impressed even such an unsympathetic though not unkindly nature as that of Pepys, who records in his diary his feelings at seeing the poor folk led off to prison from their conventicles, going "like lambs, without

<sup>1</sup> Besse, *Sufferings*, vol. i. p. 248.

any resistance"! The effect upon stronger and deeper natures was different ; for it was at this period that William Penn and Robert

**1667** Barclay threw in their lot with Friends. The sudden change in

Penn's case from favour at court to disownment by his father, the admiral, and a nine-months' imprisonment in the Tower, was test indeed of earnestness of conviction ; nor was it altogether an easy task for a scholar like Barclay to follow his father's example in becoming one of a people hated as heretics and despised as ignorant and illiterate men. Both brought their natural gifts and previous training to the service of the Society they had joined, and both possessed powers of statesmanship which were of great value in building up its organisation. But though Barclay was able to set forth the principles of the Quakers in a way none had attempted before him, and to challenge the theological scholarship of Europe, and though Penn might have been expected to take a position of pre-eminence as the founder of a new colony and commonwealth, and author of a unique experiment in civic government, yet neither endeavoured to take any place of peculiar authority apart from their fellow-workers. They were simply Quaker preachers like the rest, and took their

part gladly with men of modest intellectual powers and humble rank, as brothers of a common service.

They were following thus the example of one who under the previous Government had also been willing to sacrifice all prospects of material advantage by joining the Quakers, and who now bore his full share of persecution. This was Isaac Penington, the son of the Puritan Lord Mayor who bore so large a part in the struggle between king and Parliament. He had long been one of the Seekers, and had gone through much spiritual suffering before he joined the Quakers, to find with them a calm which no persecutions could destroy. Under the Restoration he was imprisoned six times, once for holding a meeting for worship in his own house, and another time for attending a Quaker's funeral at Amersham. Twice he was imprisoned in Aylesbury Jail during the pleasure of the Earl of Bridgewater, without any kind of trial, for more than two years in all, confined in damp rooms and exposed to the contagion of the plague. Finally, he was kept for a year and three-quarters in Reading Jail under sentence of *præmunire*, and was deprived of his Buckinghamshire estates. Yet in the midst of all, in spite of loss of health and property, he was

able to impress all who knew him by the gentle charm of his nature, and to aid the spread of Quaker views by his writings, which still speak to us of the calm and joy of the mystic reconciled with God and man.<sup>1</sup>

Amid all those who suffered for their faith under Charles II. there is perhaps no figure more attractive than that of the aged William Dewsbury, one of Fox's earliest converts and fellow-workers. He underwent imprisonments in Warwick lasting in all for nineteen years, and of these four years were spent in strict confinement in the common jail. In the later years of his imprisonment he was allowed to live at the sergeant's ward, and here he was cheered by the presence of his twelve-year-old grandchild Mary Sam, who came from her parents' home in Bedfordshire to live with him in the jail. At length, however, the child fell ill and died, and when the old man was at last released by the proclamation of King James II. in 1686, he was so enfeebled by his long imprisonment that he tells us he was often compelled to rest twice or thrice, for faintness, on his walk from his home to the meeting in the town. But what

<sup>1</sup> Collected after his death in 1679 and published under the title of *The Works of the Long Mournful and Sorely Distressed Isaac Penington*, 2 pt., 1681, 4to,

illuminates this record of suffering is the beautiful spirit in which the man bore all his hardships ; gentle and unrepining to the end, he bore no ill-will against his persecutors, and saw in the evils he suffered a means by which he hoped to win them to the truth. From time to time he would write letters to Friends throughout the country or in prison like himself, which bring back to one's memory the glowing faith of Ignatius of Antioch, but breathe a gentler and kindlier spirit than that of the old martyr bishop. When he was confined for the last time at Warwick (under the charge that he was a Jesuit in disguise) he wrote to exhort Friends to be ready with him "to forsake wife and children, to give up our lives daily in tumults, strifes, bloodshed, with cruel sufferings, both in prison and when at liberty, for to bring enemies out of enmity in the light to be in union with God." <sup>1</sup>

At the close of his life, in the spring of 1688, he came up to London, where he had useful service ; but before long he was seized with the recurrent fever which he had had for many years in prison, and he returned home by short journeys to die. On his death-bed he spoke to the Friends about

<sup>1</sup> *The Faithful Testimony of . . . William Dewsbury* [1689], 4to, p. 354.

him of the way in which the Divine power had sustained him, since his first call as a minister: "Therefore, Friends, be faithful and trust in the Lord your God; for this I can say, I never since played the coward, but joyfully entered prisons as palaces, telling mine enemies to hold me there as long as they could. And in the prison-house I sang praises to my God, and esteemed the bolts and locks put upon me as jewels; and in the name of the eternal God I always got the victory."<sup>1</sup>

The work done by George Fox amidst this time of persecution was of great importance, and it was during its stress that he devoted himself to establishing the Church organisation of the Quakers upon a firm basis. After well nigh three years of imprisonment, he had been released in 1666 from Scarborough, and for a time was able to travel about more freely, suggesting in 1667 the starting of a school for Quaker boys at Waltham, and one for girls at Shacklewell, "for instructing them in whatsoever things were civil and useful in the creation;"<sup>2</sup> for the early Quakers were no

<sup>1</sup> Edward Smith, *The Life of William Dewsbury*. 1836, 8vo, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Journal, ii. p. 89.



enemies to knowledge, as such a life as Thomas Ellwood's well shows. In 1669 he

1669 visited Ireland, and on his return he simply chronicles one of the great events of his life, his marriage to the brave woman who had so long shared his faith and already suffered for it. Margaret Fell had been a widow for more than ten years, and was now visiting a married daughter in Bristol. Before the marriage took place she called all her children, at the request of Fox, that they and theirs might agree that they suffered no loss by the marriage. Her daughters<sup>1</sup> gave it their hearty approval; her son alone, who had no sympathy with the Quakers and was a spendthrift eager to get more money into his hands, had no liking for the match.

George and Margaret Fox were each so intent on their work and so united in the whole object of their lives, that they were willing for its sake to undergo long separations, and the first came speedily. Fox and his wife parted not long after the wedding, she returning to Swarthmore and he to his work in the South. After about a month of travelling service he wrote to her arranging that they should meet again in Leicestershire, but in the meantime Margaret Fox

<sup>1</sup> Six of her seven daughters signed the marriage certificate.

had been carried off on an order from the Council to Lancaster Jail under a sentence of *præmunire*, for which she had already been imprisoned at intervals from the year 1663. Fox endeavoured in vain to procure her release, until 1671, when, on the eve of his setting sail with a company of Quaker ministers for the West Indies and America, she was at length able to rejoin him. In the interval had come the sharp outburst of persecution which followed the passing of the Second Conventicle Act in 1670. Fox tells us how he went at once when the Act had come into force to the meeting at Gracechurch Street, where he expected that the storm was most likely to begin.

1670

A guard had been set to prevent any from entering the meeting-house; the Quakers met in the courtyard. As George Fox was speaking, an informer came up with a constable and soldiers, and he was carried away before the Lord Mayor. Unexpectedly he was released, and at once returned to the meeting. Thus throughout London and over the whole country the Quakers continued to meet in spite of the Act. Their meeting-houses were closed, or even pulled down, but they gathered together in the street outside or amid the ruins. In some

cases when the adult members of the meeting were all in prison, their children met together at the accustomed place of prayer. <sup>1</sup>

In August, 1670, came the famous trial of William Penn and William Mead, for taking part at a meeting for worship in Gracechurch Street, ending at length in their acquittal, though the Recorder sent jury and prisoners to Newgate together in spite of the verdict. For many months during this time of suffering Fox lay at death's door at Enfield. At length he was able to resume his work, and succeeded in obtaining his wife's freedom in time for her to see him again before he started for America. His work now lay more especially in confirming and strengthening the groups of Quakers which were already gathered together, and in establishing in all parts a form of Church organisation; and it is characteristic of the later years of his life that his *Journal* makes frequent reference to that Divine principle in the soul for which he bore constant witness, not merely as of old

<sup>1</sup> A striking instance of this occurred at Bristol, when, throughout the summer of 1682, the meeting was kept up by the children, though the boys were punished by the stocks and by unmerciful flogging (*Besse*, vol. i. p. 66). The children at Cambridge and at Reading showed similar faith and courage.

as "the Light," but as "the Seed of God," or simply "the Seed," "the Immortal Seed."

The metaphor seems to show how Fox wished to express his consciousness that, whether in the individual soul or in the community, the Divine immanence involves a process of living and organic growth. Amid the stress of persecution he grew increasingly sensible of the interdependence of one life upon another, and the importance of a system of religious fellowship which would express this relationship. As one turns the later pages of his Journal one is struck with his deep enthusiasm for this work of organisation and his faith that it was the expression of an eternal truth. He rejoices again and again that "the Gospel order" is set up, and is confident that this will endure when other forms of Church government have passed away. However little it may seem to some that the Society of Friends has actually realised the thought of Fox, it may still be possible to recognise in this conception of an organisation in which the aristocratic and democratic ideals are united in the higher ideal of theocracy, the pattern of Church government which shall endure when less perfect forms have disappeared, or have been raised to its level.

It was after his return from America in 1673 that George Fox suffered imprisonment for the last time. He was journeying northward with his wife, when a meeting in a barn which they attended was made the ground for his arrest and imprisonment in Worcester Jail, along with his wife's son-in-law, Thomas Lower. At the time of his arrest, Fox had been hoping to proceed to Leicestershire to be present at his aged mother's death-bed,<sup>1</sup> at her earnest desire, but he was not now to see her again. Twice he was sent up to London to the King's Bench, and at length, after prolonged delay, at the close of the year 1674(75), he was finally set free by proclamation of the court.

Henceforth he was to share his Friends' sufferings only in spirit, but though, after two or three years of rest at Swarthmore, he was strong enough to make two journeys to Holland, one extended into Northern Germany, he never regained the health and strength which he had lost through repeated imprisonments, and during the last years of his life

<sup>1</sup> It is characteristic of his reticence as to all personal matters that we learn this almost by accident from his Journal, through the letter of protest addressed by the prisoners to the Lord-Lieutenant inserted in it (Journal, vol. ii. p. 207).

travelled but little away from London. His duty kept him there rather than in the comfortable home at Swarthmore, and in spite of bodily weakness he was active up to the end, visiting the sick, attending meetings, and corresponding with Friends at home and abroad. He was able to witness the release of 1,460 Quaker prisoners by James II., and to see the Declaration of Indulgence legalised by the Act of Toleration.

Margaret Fox felt that she could not leave her work in the North, but she made more than one long journey that she might be with her husband, the last one when she was seventy-six years of age, about half a year before his death, a visit which she tells us was the most full of comfort of all the times she was in London.

When at length the end came, George Fox was ready. Three days before his death he preached with great power and solemnity at Gracechurch Street meeting. We do not know what his message then was, but the words which he spoke to some who came to see him on his death-bed seem fittingly to close not only his own brave life, but the era of persecution the end of which he had witnessed: "All is well; the Seed of God reigns over all, and over death itself."

1690

## VII

### *ORGANISATION*

THE student of Church history will note with interest how not a few of the problems that confront him in the wider story of the Church are reproduced in that of the small body of the Society of Friends. The three orders to which one school attaches so much importance—deacons, presbyters, and bishops—are preserved curiously enough in the Quaker names of ministers, elders, and overseers. And just as, in recent years, the keenest controversy and the most painstaking research of Church historians have been connected with the original meaning and nature of the offices of presbyter and bishop, so too we shall find that students of Quaker history are met with a like problem. At the close of the eighteenth century it was questioned whether "elders" and "overseers" were interchangeable names, while at a later date

Robert Barclay, of Tottenham, maintained the view that in the seventeenth century "elders" were nothing more nor less than "acknowledged ministers."

During the first few years of the Quaker movement there existed no sort of organisation amongst the "Children of Light," as they were called. Indeed, George Fox had no idea of founding a separate religious body; he simply went about proclaiming his message to all, and trusting that the truth he preached would set men free, wherever the message was heeded. They, in their turn, would become messengers of the Evangel, and so it might be hoped that in no short time the whole body of professing Christians would come to realise their helplessness without this personal religion, and would rule their lives and worship by faith in the immediate presence of the Light of Christ in the soul of each. George Fox had probably no more idea of founding a new sect than had Luther of separating Christendom into two great divisions of Protestant and Catholic. Their object was to set forth anew the living Gospel, to draw men to it and away from shams, to proclaim a great and universal message, not to organise a party or create a new association of people.



So for the first few years, as Fox and the early Quaker preachers moved about over the country, the word "Friends" meant simply all who were friendly to the truth they proclaimed and lived in harmony with it. All over the land they had found little groups of "Seekers" who had already anticipated one side of the teaching of Fox as to the failure and unreality of a formal Christianity, which lacked the spirit and power of Christ. These Seekers had now become Friends; they had been accustomed often already to meet together in silence, under a sense of common need and dependence upon the Unseen, and thus the nucleus of regular meetings for worship already existed in many places.

As persecution speedily followed the new wave of religious life, and all the prejudices of the local magistrates were brought into play against the Quakers, it was a perfectly natural outcome of the friendly relationship which had grown up between the Friends of the new movement that, as one and another suffered imprisonment, those that remained free would take care for them and provide, when needful, for their families. As the persecution increased, and it appeared clear that it would be of no short duration, it

became reasonable that these efforts to help the suffering should be put on a more certain basis, and hence it was found desirable for one group of Friends to join with others who might be in greater need, or perhaps in some cases freer to help. Thus arose the first beginnings of Church organisation amongst the Quakers, as a simple act of mutual protection and helpfulness amongst men who shared the same ideals and were suffering for the same cause.

The first "Monthly Meeting" appears to have been that of the Friends of Durham, which was started in 1653. It was then arranged that "some of every meeting" should come together "every first Seventh Day of each month," principally to make arrangements with regard to Friends in prison, or in need of other help, such as widows and orphans or the families of prisoners. Shortly afterwards a Monthly Meeting was started at Swarthmore, no doubt on similar lines. During this year George Fox was often at Swarthmore and in the neighbourhood, and also passed through Durham holding meetings, but he does not make any mention, in his Journal at this point, of the setting up of Monthly Meetings, which may perhaps have

occurred while he was in Carlisle Jail. When, in 1654, however, he turns southward again, he says he did so "when the Churches were settled in the north," which would seem to imply the formation of definite congregations of Friends.

But though this organisation existed at so early a date in the northern centre of Quakerism, it was only much later that it became generally adopted, and that at the cost of great efforts and in face of a controversy whose bitterness may well puzzle us to-day.

In the meantime, throughout a greater part of the country, the only link connecting the different congregations of Friends was formed by the travelling preachers going from meeting to meeting. At an early date, however, we find frequent allusions in George Fox's Journal to "General Meetings." These would seem to have been, originally, simply meetings attended by a large number of people from some distance round, not exclusively Friends.<sup>1</sup>

This was certainly the case at the first General Meeting of which we have knowledge, that at Swannington, in 1654. "Travel-

<sup>1</sup> Journal, vol. ii. p. 12.

ling through Derbyshire," says George Fox,  
1654 "I visited Friends till I came  
to Swannington, in Leicestershire,  
where there was a general meeting, to which  
many Ranters, Baptists, and other professors  
came ; for great contests there had been with  
them, and with the priests of that town. To  
this meeting several friends came from various  
parts, as John Audland, Francis Howgill, and  
Edward Pyot from Bristol, and Edward Bur-  
rough from London ; and several were con-  
vinced in those parts. The Ranters made a  
disturbance and were very rude ; but at last  
the Lord's power came over them and they  
were confounded. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

At such meetings it was natural that col-  
lections should be made for the poor, and  
to pay the travelling expenses of "public  
friends" who needed this help, and inquiries  
were made as to the suffering of Friends in  
different parts of the country, and advice  
given by many who had been Justices them-  
selves, as to means of redress. Thus we  
have at once the germs of a "business meet-  
ing" for Church affairs, and it would seem  
that minutes made at the General Meeting  
were taken home by Friends attending it in  
their own districts.

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 199.

These General Meetings seem to have been at times especially for the Friends of one county.<sup>1</sup> At other times the General Meetings were wider in scope. Thus in his Journal for 1660 George Fox writes: "And so to Skipton, where there was a General Meeting of men Friends out of many counties, concerning the affairs of the Church. . . . To this Meeting came Friends out of most parts of the nation, for it was about business relating to the Church both in this nation and beyond the seas. Several years before, when I was in the North I was moved to recommend the setting up of this Meeting for that service: for many Friends suffered in divers parts of the nation, their goods were taken from them contrary to the law and they understood not how to help them-

<sup>1</sup> Thus in 1663 George Fox notes: "From the meeting near Collumpton we went to Taunton, where we had a large meeting. Then next day we came to a General Meeting in Somersetshire, which was very large," and a little later . . . "we came to Street, and to William Beeton's at Puddimore, where we had a very large General Meeting." Similarly when in Cornwall a little earlier he speaks of going to Loveday Hambley's, "where we had a General Meeting for the whole county, and all was quiet." In 1668 they held a "General Meeting for all the country" at the same house.

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selves, or where to seek redress. But after this Meeting was set up, several Friends who had been magistrates, and others that understood something of the law came thither, and were able to inform Friends, and to assist them in gathering up the sufferings, that they might be laid before the justices, judges, or Parliament. This Meeting had stood several years and divers justices and captains had come to break it up; but when they understood the business Friends met about, and saw their books and accounts of collections for relief of the poor, how we took care one county to help another, and to help our friends beyond the seas, and provide for our poor, that none of them should be chargeable to their parishes, &c., the justices and officers confessed we did their work, and passed away peaceably and lovingly, commending Friends' practice. Sometimes there would come two hundred of the poor of other people, and would wait there till the Meeting was done (for all the country knew we met about the poor,) and after the Meeting Friends would send to the bakers for bread, and give everyone of those poor people a loaf, how many soever there were of them; for we were taught to 'do good unto all; though especially to the household of faith.' After this Meet-

ing I visited Friends in their Meetings, till I came to Lancaster, whence I went to Robert Widder's, and so to Arnside, where I had a General Meeting for all the Friends in Westmorland, Cumberland, and Lancashire." <sup>1</sup>

Thus it is clear that these General Meetings contained the germ both of the present  
**1658**      Quarterly Meetings and of the  
                 central Yearly Meeting. The latter name seems first to occur in the case of the Yearly Meeting at Scalehouse, near Skipton, in 1658, which sent out an epistle recommending a collection in aid of the religious visits of Friends "beyond the seas."

In the same year George Fox's Journal gives an account of another Yearly Meeting in Bedfordshire, that at Scalehouse having been more especially for the North Country. "After some time we came to John Crook's house, where a General Yearly Meeting for the whole nation was appointed to be held. This Meeting lasted three days, and many Friends from most parts of the nation came to it; so that the inns and towns around were filled, for many thousands of people were at it." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Journal, i. 469.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., i. 418.

The Minutes of this Meeting contain what is perhaps the earliest reference to "Overseers" in the new Society. "That collections be timely made for the poor that are so indeed, as they are moved, according to order, for relief of prisoners, and for other necessary uses, as need shall require; and all moneys so collected on account thereof to be taken from which any need may be supplied, as made known by the Overseers in every Meeting; that no private ends may be answered, but all brought to the light, that the Gospel be not slandered.

"That care be taken for the families and goods of such as are called forth unto the Ministry, or are imprisoned for truth's sake; that no creature be lost for want of the creatures."

There seems already to have been some fear lest the last injunction should be misunderstood, for at the Durham General Meeting in 1659 a Minute was made "That all collections made by Friends at their Monthly Meetings as also at their General Meetings be for the needs of the Churches in general, and not be limited for those that are in the Ministry; who will be as much grieved as others offended to have a maintenance or hire raised on purpose for them."



The Quaker organisation was evidently developing, but it was still without any unifying scheme of Church government, though it is clear that in London there did exist some definite arrangements for the care of the prisoners for some time before the Monthly Meetings were set up. As Thos. Ellwood tells us in his Journal, in 1662, "an excellent order, even in those early days, was practised among the Friends of that City (London), by which there were certain Friends of either sex appointed to have the oversight of the prisons in every Quarter, and to take care of all Friends, the poor especially, that should be committed thither."

But as these measures of orderly arrangement increased, opposition to them became more and more marked. The first difficulties arose curiously enough in what seems now an extraordinary controversy, as to whether or no Friends should remove their hats during vocal prayer.

George Fox had always given as one of his reasons for refusing this honour to men, that it was one peculiarly due to God, and he insisted on the duty of keeping to this instinctive mark of reverence in approaching the Divine Presence.

1661

John Perrot, who was the leader of the new

party, wrote from the Madhouse at Rome (where the not unkindly Inquisitors had imprisoned him) to protest against this formality. He was willing, however, to allow those who felt so drawn to throw themselves on their faces and loose their shoes from off their feet during prayer, as for this he was able to find Scripture precedent.<sup>1</sup> In spite of his eccentricity, Perrot managed to draw

a number of Friends after him,  
**1673** and these published their view in 1673 in a book entitled *The Spirit of the Hat*, protesting against all artificial forms in worship.

In the meantime Fox must have realised the results which would follow if the wild individualism of Perrot's friends should have its way, and he met the crisis by going through the country, setting up Monthly Meetings for discipline in districts which did not already possess them. It has been suggested by Dr. Thos. Hodgkin<sup>2</sup> that it was during his long imprisonment at Scarborough Castle in 1665

<sup>1</sup> "He not only," says Sewel, "insisted on retaining his hat in the Meeting while prayer was being made, but made another extravagant step and let his beard grow."

<sup>2</sup> *George Fox*, 1896, 8vo., p. 205, seq.

city of this work came home to know that Friends were suffering, more severely than ever before; he was still present with him the need of a thorough organisation for self-defence, both against persecutions from without and dangers from within. He had not forgotten the trouble that had come in the past to his friends through the fall of James Nayler: John Perrot and other strange spirits were still active and might at any time cause like difficulties; there was need for the new body to have power to exclude from its fellowship such as were doing harm to the cause of truth.

George Fox simply mentions the first occasion on which this concern bore fruit, in his Journal for the year 1666. "Then I was moved of the Lord to recommend the setting up of five Monthly Meetings of men and women in the city of London (besides the Women's Meetings and the Quarterly Meetings) to take care of God's glory, and to admonish and exhort such as walked disorderly or carelessly, and not according to truth. For whereas Friends had had only Quarterly Meetings, now the truth was spread, I was moved to recommend the setting up of

Monthly Meetings through the  
 And the Lord showed me what  
 and how the men's and women's Monthly and  
 Quarterly Meetings should be ordered and  
 established in this and other nations; and  
 that I should write to those where I did not  
 come, to do the same." <sup>1</sup>

From this time forth the organisation of the Society became Fox's great concern, and his travels both in England and America were largely concerned with it. With great insight he perceived the dangers of a congregational system which would isolate weak Meetings from strong ones and give undue power to local influences: he felt that the grouping of neighbouring Meetings into Monthly Meetings, as already practised in the North, should be carried out throughout the country, and that these should be further co-ordinated by Quarterly Meetings for larger districts and a Yearly Meeting to unite the whole country. Feeling as he did the importance of the place of women in the Church, he also saw that there should be Monthly Meetings for women as well as men, the women's Meetings taking especial care for the sick and poor.

During the Commonwealth provision had

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 80.

civil marriage before a magis-  
tration to the religious ceremony in  
show the former practice was  
and the clergy attacked Friends'  
ages as invalid. George Fox saw the  
of guarding against occasions of stum-  
bling in this matter, and the careful regulation  
of marriages was one of the chief objects for  
which he urged the establishment of the  
Monthly Meetings.

But all this caused great offence to many  
Friends who had been attracted to the new  
Society by the individualistic side of the  
teaching of its early preachers: the Light  
which lighteth every man was, they said,  
sufficient guide to each. For a group of  
Meetings to order individual Meetings to  
take action in things for which they might  
have no concern was to override true Chris-  
tian liberty: still less then had any Church  
organisation, they said, right to judge indi-  
vidual members or settle disputes between  
them (this being a duty Fox laid strongly  
upon the Monthly Meetings). They even  
questioned the right to exclude individuals  
from membership on moral or doctrinal  
grounds, since what the Meeting regarded as  
sin and error might not appear as such to the  
individual in question, according to the Light

that was given him, which alone could be his standard of life and conduct.

Several prominent ministers now definitely took the side of these individualists, the two leaders being John Wilkinson and John Story, of Preston, in Westmorland. They were joined by Thos. Curtis, of Reading, and Wm. Rogers, a wealthy Bristol merchant, with several other well-known men. Their bitterest opposition seems to have been to the setting up of women's Meetings, which they considered a "monstrous" and unheard-of innovation. They opposed any disciplinary action being taken against Friends who went to be married by a clergyman, or those who paid tithes, and were only willing to allow of the use of Monthly and General Meetings in so far as they were informal gatherings attended by those who felt free so to do, their recommendations being only followed where individual meetings could unite with the proposals. They also recommended Friends to meet in secret, in order to avoid persecution, and were in favour of the closing of Meeting-houses, where needful or expedient. They disliked the provision of money to assist travelling ministers in their journeys abroad, and evidently sympathised with the Quietist ideal of worship, for

we find the complaint made against them that they objected to a congregation giving outward utterance to its feelings, and tried to suppress "groanings, sighings, soundings, and singings," congregational singing being at the time not altogether unknown amongst Friends, as is seen by the hymn written by Catherine Evans, the music of which is printed by Sewel in his Dutch edition.

Apart from these deep-lying questions of principle, opposition to the personal influence of George Fox undoubtedly had much to do with the movement. This magnetic power over men, to which so many passages in his Journal bear witness, sometimes acted as a repelling force, and the new discipline was represented by the seceders as an attempt to set up a hierarchic system, with Fox as head and Pope controlling all. Great efforts were made to check any separation, and for some time the schism was avoided.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 1673 an epistle was sent out to be read in Quarterly Meetings, Monthly Meetings, and other Meetings, signed by a number of weighty Friends, including Wm. Penn, Robert Barclay, George Whitehead, Stephen Crisp, Alexander Parker, John Raunce, and William Rogers (who both afterwards joined the separation), dealing with the need for kindly wisdom in the exercise of Church discipline; "elders and overseers" "must not be self-willed"

In 1676 a conference was held at Drawell, near Sedbergh, at which Story and Wilkinson  
**1676** signed a paper of recantation ; but the controversy was not stopped. These two Friends, with their followers, seceded from the main body of their own

nor "soon angry." The epistle pleads "that none join to such a singular spirit as would lead him to be sole judge in his own case, but in the restoring and healing spirit of Christ both the offended and the offender may for the truth's sake submit to the power of God in His own people, in those cities, places or counties with such Friends as they with the parties concerned shall call to their assistance ; for they do and will judge for God ; and if any will not give up his matter to the judgment of truth in his people, he doth but render himself and his cause suspicious, and that he wants the sense of the fellowship of the Body : and as Friends keep in Wisdom and patience concerning such it will come over him and be his Burden. . . . And though a general care be not laid upon every member touching the good order and government in the Church's affairs, nor have many travelled therein, yet, the Lord hath laid it more upon some in whom He hath opened Council for that end (and particularly in our dear Brother and God's faithful labourer, G. F.) for the help of many and God hath, in His wisdom afforded those helps and Governments in the Churches which are not to be despised, being in subjection to Christ the one head and Lawgiver, answering His witness in all" (Devonshire House MSS.).



Meeting, and then went up and down the country inducing others to do the like. In Reading, Bristol,<sup>1</sup> Chippenham, Alston, and elsewhere, the seceders being trustees of the Meeting-houses, took possession, and kept Friends from using them for some years. There was a large number of Friends in Wiltshire who sided with the secession, and after the death of John Story they published a glowing testimony to his character and life-work, which was answered by Thos. Camm, a native of Story's own meeting, who told his admirers how their apostle got Friends there to meet in secluded gills and corners of the hills, with a lad on the watch to give a token to him if any sign of the soldiers should appear, he having told Friends that if they would but press his foot he would instantly stop preaching; or how on another occasion he bade Friends keep the doors barred against the soldiers while he himself hid in a cock-loft, leaving the Meeting to fend for itself.

This may not seem a very worthy attack upon Story, and at first sight it may appear that the seceders' refusal to disown members for marriage before a clergyman or the payment of tithes showed a greater liberality and width of spirit than that of the main section of Quakers. But we hardly realise in judging

<sup>1</sup> In Bristol W. Rogers, who became a trustee of the Meeting-house in 1680, got possession of the title deeds, and when the city authorities seized the house would lend no help in maintaining the Meeting's claim.

thus what this attitude meant in such a time of terrible stress. The second Conventicle Act of Charles II. had been passed, and persecution was at its height. The Quakers almost alone amongst Dissenters stood up openly for religious liberty by continuing to meet in public, despite the law, in their old Meeting-houses, or on the sites of them when they had been pulled down. To avoid persecution by meeting in private, to encourage compromise and time-serving in the matter of weddings and tithe-paying was in effect to give up the struggle, or to retire from it defeated. Only by presenting a united front, and acting together as one body, were Friends able to persevere and win the victory they ultimately did. The separatists aimed at a liberty of conscience which meant anarchy in the Church. They were only willing for a Minute of disapproval on account of some moral offence to be recorded when the offending party himself was willing for this to be done, and it is obvious that this would mean that the most serious cases could not be dealt with at all by Church discipline.

For a short time George Whitehead was inclined to be drawn aside by the separatists' views, and Thos. Ellwood had at an earlier date been one of John Perrot's "hatmen," but

he had soon seen his mistake, and now entered the lists on behalf of Fox. Wm. Rogers, of Bristol, in 1680, wrote a lengthy work entitled *The Christian Quaker Distinguished from the Apostate and Innovator*, in which he made a bitter attack on George Fox, to which Ellwood in 1682 replied. Rogers returned to the fight in a pamphlet in doggerel verse, to which Ellwood again rejoined in like form in his *Rogeromastix* in 1685. Rogers contrasted the new ordered liberty of Church Government which Fox pleaded for with the old individual freedom of the early days:—

“The Gospel loud did cry : our Law’s the light,  
 Liberty of conscience is men’s right ;  
 But when that Fox about Church Government  
 More than the Gospel time and labour spent  
 I’ the stead of liberty of conscience he  
 Said Liberty of th’ Gospel, it must be.

When he had fram’d i’ th’ Church a Govern-  
 ment,  
 Preachers, approved by Man, beyond seas went,  
 Who when they wanted moneys to proceed  
 The Church Her cash then did supply their need  
 If they their motion freely did submit  
 To the London Church, and do as She thought  
 fit.”

He went on to describe the growing power

and importunity of the London Church and "Morning Meeting" of ministers and elders, held weekly in London :—

"At length her papers, like to briefs did cry  
For money, money for the Ministry."

The worthy merchant had occasionally to help out his limping verse with such tags of prose as "to procede," "hence I conclude," over which Ellwood makes merry: he too will write verse for verse, he says :—

"If verse without offense that may be call'd  
Which is delivered in rhimes so bald,  
So flat, so dull, so rough, so void of grace,  
Where sympathy and cadence have no place  
So full of chasmes, stuck with prosy pegs  
Whereon his tir'd muse might rest her legs  
(Not having wings) and take new breath that then  
She might, with much adoe, hop on again."

Point for point he answers Rogers, maintaining that Fox did not send preachers about from place to place at his own mere will, but only with the joint concern of those who went, just as Paul might lay it upon Timothy and Epaphroditus to take up some special work; and he repels the attack on the payment of travelling expenses of ministers bravely :—

"May none beyond seas go, but who can spare  
Sufficient of their own the charge to bear?"

Must Christ be so confi'd He may not send  
 Any but such as have <sup>2</sup>states to spend?  
 God bless us from such doctrine and such  
 teachers  
 'As will admit of none but wealthy preachers."

Probably the ablest contribution to the discussion of the problem was that given in 1676 by Robert Barclay in *The Anarchy of the Ranters*. Barclay distinguishes between the true Church order and discipline and the hierarchic system with which it was confused by the separatists. Business meetings should be concerned with widows, orphans, and education, the settling of disputes between Friends, marriages, and questions of discipline in delinquencies; these might be considered as "outward things," while from the inward side the Church meetings should guard against the danger of erroneous teaching.

Barclay holds up against the separatists' view of individual liberty under the guidance of the Spirit, the higher truth of the subordination of the members to the fulfilment each of their own office in the body. The Spirit was not merely a guide to the individual, but to the Church, and in every true Church assembly the infallible Spirit must be present, though of course no mere numerical majority

could be any judge of His will. It was some years before the controversy was settled, but finally, as Sewel says, the separatists melted like snow; a number eventually admitting their error and returning to the main body of Friends. The result was indeed an inevitable one, for no society of men could endure for long whose principles were so antagonistic to all common responsibility and all hope of organic growth, which necessarily involves the subordination of the individual to the wider life of the whole body.

Robert Barclay, of Tottenham, in his *Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*, has maintained the view that the influence of this separation was far deeper than is usually supposed, and that it ultimately resulted in a gradual victory for the Quietist party after the death of Fox and his contemporaries. This he connects with the slow growth in power of "lay elders," his view being that in the early days of the Quaker movement the elders were exclusively ministers. One cannot help sharing the opinion of Dr. Charles Evans, of Philadelphia, that Barclay's view on this point is unconsciously prejudiced by his enthusiasm for the Methodist system of

preachers established by John Wesley. Men like Thomas Ellwood, even in the early days of the Society of Friends, were greatly valued as elders and for their help in carrying out the organisation of the Church, although they were not public ministers. All the evidence that we have, however, seems to show that such Friends were quite exceptional. It was not till almost the middle of the eighteenth century that the elders were largely men and women who seldom or never themselves took part in the ministry.

Before passing from the question of the growth of the early Quaker Society, it may be worth while to picture for a moment the condition of things in the later years of the seventeenth century, when the new polity was already in good working order. A large amount of material for this study is in existence amongst the MSS. at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate Street, and amongst the documents of the various Monthly and Quarterly Meetings in the provinces.<sup>1</sup>

Taking as an instance Settle Monthly

<sup>1</sup> A most interesting study of the life of country meetings in the Southern counties will be found in the work of Thos. William Marsh, *Some Records of the Early Friends in Surrey and Sussex*. London, 1886, 4to.

Meeting, whose documents are now preserved at Leeds, we find in 1666 this little group of five or six country congregations collecting the sum of £12 19s. 3d. "for the use of Friends who suffered loss by fire at London." At the same time there is a collection of £7 13s. 4d. "for the supply of Friends in prison and for the service of the truth in generall." The latter entry represents a constantly recurring feature in the early Minutes: such collections were independent of those for the poor of the district itself, which were made with great regularity. In connection with the care of the poor we shall find such entries as that referring to the payment of fees for a poor apprentice.

The Meeting also records with care the arrival of Friends' books (which came from London through the Quarterly Meeting at York), and arranges for their circulation amongst the various Meetings. There are frequent entries, such as that of 6 xii. 1694: "The collection of books of Robert Barclay and William Dewsbury is this day gone into Bolland and to stay two months."

Arrangements were also made for the interchange of visits between different congregations, as is seen in such an entry as that of 7 i. 169 $\frac{3}{4}$ : "It is agreed this day that



Rilston Meeting Friends or Friend do attend Starrhouse Meeting this first month, Salterforth Meeting 2nd Month, Settle Meeting the 3rd month, Bentham Meeting the 4th month, and Bolland Meeting the fifth month, and then Rilston to begin again, but if any of the said Meeting do find they cannot attend the said Meetings as herein set downe, the one to acquaint the monthly Meeting . . . so that some other Friend might supply their place."

Other entries of interest show that in 1682 two Friends were appointed in each Meeting as visitors to prevent and remove causes of stumbling through ill living, an office later known as that of overseer. (And cf. 2 vi. 1693.)

From time to time the Meeting has to disown some member for disorderly living, and the approval of proposals of marriage between different members, after due intervals for inquiry, is a constantly recurring subject. Occasionally too the Meeting disowns a member who has been married by a priest. As time goes on there is evidence of an increasing amount of centralisation. Thus, in 2 vii. 1696, "a general collection for the Yearly Meeting" of £2 14s. 2d. is sent up to the Quarterly Meeting at York, in direct

response to a request from the central authority, while in 1692 (30 vi.) Samuel Watson and William Ellis are appointed by the Monthly Meeting to inquire the advice of London Friends concerning a Friend "that desires to take his first couzen's daughter to wife." The Friends consulted were the "Morning Meeting" of ministers and elders which met weekly in London, and acted in the early days of the Society in many ways as an executive committee of the Yearly Meeting.<sup>1</sup>

There does not appear to be evidence of any custom of formal application for membership amongst the early Quakers; for the first two generations of the Society persecution was so severe that there was little to induce men to join from unworthy motives, and those who endeavoured to count as Quakers merely with a view to receiving a share in the collec-

<sup>1</sup> The Minutes of the Morning Meeting for 22 vi. 1692 show that George Whitehead, John Field, and Theodore Eccleston were appointed to draw up an answer. A copy of this (signed by the two latter) is preserved in William Ellis's collection of letters and papers among the Settle MSS. at Leeds. The reply refers to the Minute of the Yearly Meeting of 1675 against the marriage of first cousins, but cautiously leaves the final decision in this case to the Monthly Meeting.

tions for the 'poor and distressed would be soon detected. But even in the dark days of Charles II. the country districts had their times of quiet and peace; to which these old records bear witness. The following consecutive entries are typical of many more: "Settle Monthly Meeting holden the 6th day of the 7 mo. (85) when Friends having met together in the fear of the Lord having little outward concern to consider upon, being retired in their minds were refreshed together in the unity of the Spirit according to measure. Settle Monthly Meeting holden the 6th of the 8th month (85) Friends being met together in the fear of the Lord, where after consideration finding little outward business to be concern'd about, were refreshed in the feeling of the love of God to be shed abroad amongst them."

But it must not be supposed that the Friends of this remote district of Craven rested content with their times of quiet, mystical communion. From this little group of country Meetings two ministers, at least, went forth to wider service throughout the country, Samuel Watson journeying twice to Scotland, and William Ellis visiting both Ireland and Pennsylvania "in the service of truth"; in their turn, these little Meetings received visits from well-

known Quaker preachers from other parts of the country, and this interchange of service was only what went on throughout all the places where Meetings of Friends were held. Such visits were fruitful in the formation of lasting friendships, and the collection of papers formed by William Ellis preserves copies of a large number of letters which passed between him and Friends whom he had visited in America, or such fellow-ministers as William Edmondson. It was on the self-sacrifice of such men as these, who gave their whole lives freely to this service, that the Society of Friends as an organisation was built up, and the triumphant optimism with which they persevered against all discouragement cannot fail to strike all who read the story of their lives. "Therefore have I laboured," William Ellis tells us, "with my soul, body and substance that God hath given me, to bring truth up into dominion over all the country where I live, and to bring things to rights in our Particular and Monthly Meetings. . . . For though truth hath been preached and many convinced, yet for want of a fervent mind and faithfulness it might have been said as the prophet spoke concerning the people of old : ' Jacob is low, by whom shall he arise ? ' So that here hath

been great need of faithful labourers that the sweetness and marrow of the Gospel may be brought up to peoples' understandings." Yet in spite of this he is able to say: "I am in great hopes great part of our valley will be convinced."<sup>1</sup>

The little Meeting-house at Airton, near Malham, which the good man laboured to build is still standing, and four or five Friends worship there to-day. But the change which two centuries have witnessed amongst the Society of Friends would hardly have come, had it not been for the loss of that combination of missionary vigour, careful organisation, and unselfish labour with the deep spiritual power to which that background of silent prayer and communion bears witness, and which all alike characterise the life of seventeenth-century Quakerism.

It was in the Monthly Meetings that the life of the early Quaker organisation was centred, but four times a year  
**1672** delegates from a group of these met along with others who were able to attend in the Quarterly Meeting, whose boundaries usually followed those of the different counties, while from 1672 onwards

<sup>1</sup> Ellis MS., p. 19. Among the Settle M.M. papers at Leeds.

these were in their turn grouped together into a Yearly Meeting for the whole country, which was regularly held from this date onwards in London about Whitsuntide. The earlier General Meetings which had preceded this still continued to be held at Bristol and in other places for a long after this date, though they soon ceased to have legislative power. A Yearly Meeting for Women Friends was held during the latter part of the seventeenth and the first few years of the eighteenth century in York, issuing an Epistle and corresponding with subordinate Meetings.

At length, after a considerable interval of time, a Women's Yearly Meeting was established in 1784, in London, at the same time as the Yearly Meeting for men, and since 1896 these have met in joint session when matters involving decisions of importance to the whole Society are under discussion.

It was early evident that the organisation of the new Society would be incomplete unless there were some body to which recourse could be had in the intervals between the annual General Meetings. This seems to have been found at first in the "Second Day Morning Meeting"—a gathering of "public Friends," the leading ministers

who might be in London at the time, held every week at the house of one of their number. The Meeting probably began in an informal way, the Friends in question meeting at breakfast to talk over their work, and arrange which Meetings they should visit (almost always in groups of two) on the following Sunday. The first Minute of this Meeting preserved in its books dates from 15th vii. mo. 1673, and is simply headed, "At a meeting at G. Roberts'." It was then decided that "two of a sort of all books written by Friends be procured and kept together," along with one of all written against Friends, care being taken to see that suitable answers to these should be issued. It was also minuted "that one or two of those Friends who are appointed to take care of the press be desired to attend this Meeting every Second Day." This refers to a delegation appointed by the Yearly Meeting in 1672, to have charge of the printing of Friends' books, which was done (at some risk at the hands of the authorities) by one or two Quaker printers, the various Quarterly Meetings each agreeing to take a certain number of the books printed, which were distributed by the delegates to duly appointed correspondents in each district. The "Morn-

ing Meeting" from this time takes care that all books thus printed are either read in full at its sittings or by a sub-committee, before they are sent to the press, and its subsequent Minutes deal very largely with this subject, pamphlets, letters, and books being frequently withheld for a while from publication, abridged, and corrected, or merely sent out in manuscript to the Meetings or parties concerned, and from time to time it is decided that some work is altogether unsuited for publication ;<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A pleasant instance of the kindly way in which an author might be dealt with is seen in the following letter addressed to Judith Boulthby, signed by Stephen Crisp and seven other Friends :—

" LONDON, the 18.4 mo. 1690.

" DEAR JUDITH,—Our love in the blessed truth salutes thee. This is to let thee know that we have read the paper thou left with us to be viewed and printed if we thought meet. Now as to that 'To the Women uncircumcised in heart' we think it not dependent with itself, for such as paint, adorn and dress like Jezebel are far from making clean the outside, and as to that to the magistrates we judge it not a fit time to print such account in this time of peace and quietness. But as to the 3rd, to the followers of the Lamb, we have made some little alterations in it as thou wilt see, which if thou sees meet thou mayest give forth coppies of it, it being short. Soe in the love of God we rest thy friends and brethren in the truth."



occasionally the final decision is left to the author himself, if he still feels the need to issue his message.

At its first recorded sitting the "Morning Meeting" directed Ellis Hoopes, the clerk to the Yearly Meeting, to attend in future to record its Minutes, and after meeting for some time at various houses (such as that of Gerard Roberts, and that of Ann Travers, at Horslydown) it soon came to meet regularly in the clerk's chamber. We find this body approving the establishment of new Meetings in London or the neighbourhood, sending out (27 xi. 1689) a paper to the various Quarterly Meetings and Monthly Meetings on the question of marriages, answering epistles from abroad, and from various Quarterly Meetings at home, and receiving complaints as to Friends travelling as ministers whose services were felt to be misplaced,<sup>1</sup> and

\* Thus in v. mo., 1689, Isaac Sadler, of Chelmsford, writes to the Morning Meeting, "signifying Friends' great grief and trouble concerning Mary Knight, rambling up and downe in Suffolk and Norfolk." Her husband was asked to use his influence with her, and two Friends "desired to speak at the Monthly Meeting at the Peel [in Clerkenwell] that they may give forth a testimony against her." The final disciplinary action was thus left to the judgment of the Monthly Meeting.

authorising others to go on service both at home and abroad.

Such exercise of authority by the Morning Meeting was strongly opposed by the individualistic section of the Society which Story and Wilkinson induced to separate from the main body of Friends. But the advantage of such a central authority was generally felt, and it was increased by the letter which George Fox left at his death requesting the Friends who had been accustomed from all parts of the world to write to him both to report persecutions and to ask advice, to write instead henceforth to the Morning Meeting.<sup>1</sup>

Gradually, however, this duty, along with others of importance, passed into the hands of a Meeting constituted upon a wider basis, in which, in 1901, the Morning Meeting itself was finally merged. This new Meeting, which came in time to act as the executive committee of the Society of Friends, was known as the Meeting for Sufferings.

The Yearly Meeting of 1675 had decided,

<sup>1</sup> The letter is minuted on xi. mo. 19th, 1690/91. "All Friends in all the world that used to write to me of all manner of things and passages [sufferings] and I did answer them, let them all write to the 2nd dayes meeting in London."

in view of the severe persecution which  
**1675** Friends were then undergoing, to  
call a conference of representatives  
from all the Quarterly Meetings to consult as  
to any measures that could rightly be taken  
to succour those in prison and to prevent  
needless suffering. The conference met on  
the 18th of viii. mo., 1675, and decided that  
four times a year representatives from the  
various districts should meet in London to  
advise as to sufferings which Friends were  
undergoing and receive reports which they  
might record. It was arranged that the  
London representatives should act as a sub-  
committee and summon the whole body of  
representatives if occasion required, and after  
a time the Meeting came to be held monthly  
instead of four times a year. Travelling  
ministers who might be in London would also  
attend its sittings, and other Friends might  
be present by invitation. At the present time,  
in addition to representatives chosen by each  
Quarterly Meeting, any acknowledged minis-  
ter of the Society and any elder may attend  
as of right, and other Friends interested in  
any subject under consideration frequently  
obtain the leave of the Meeting to be present.

It would hardly be fitting, however, to  
conclude this account of the origin of the

organisation of the Society of Friends without alluding to the remarkable way in which all their Church meetings and committees are constituted and arrive at their decision ; a practice which has remained unaltered since the earliest days of the Society. There is in the strictest sense of the word no chairman at these meetings, but his place is supplied by the clerk, who usually has one or more assistants at the table beside him. It is his duty to bring before the Meeting in order the various subjects which must be considered, always making room for any matter of urgency which may arise or for any subject which a Friend may feel it is his duty to lay before the Meeting. When a subject has been considered sufficiently, the clerk embodies "the sense of the Meeting" in a draft Minute, which he reads, and corrects, if necessary, in accordance with the expression of opinion. Under no circumstances does any vote take place, and the decision arrived at does not always by any means represent that of a numerical majority. It is the duty of the clerk to judge of the value of opinions expressed, as well as their number, giving especial heed to the experience and weight of character of the speakers. In such discussion oratory is out of place ; there is

no applause, and underlying this disregard of the ordinary methods of a business meeting is the thought of the unseen presence of the Head of the Church, directing all its deliberations. Now and then, although not often, this takes conscious form in the offering of vocal prayer at some occasion of difficulty, or in the solemn pause which sometimes follows as some decision of great importance is reached. The method thus adopted may perhaps be slow, and often results in the temporary postponement of some desired change, in deference to the strong wish of a small minority. But it remains a striking example of the fundamental belief of Quakerism in the reality of the Divine Presence dwelling amongst men and controlling every thought and act of life.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE reader will find in the footnotes references to a large number of the principal contemporary sources of information on Quaker history. In addition to these and to other works to which reference has been given, the *Dictionary of National Biography* will be found of great value, especially the article by the Rev. Alexander Gordon on Fox. Use should also be made of the following works :—

Gerard Croese : *Historia Quakeriana*. Amsterdam. 1695. 8vo. (Translated and published in London in 1696 as *The General History of the Quakers*.)

[Inaccurate, and hostile in standpoint, but of considerable interest, especially as having called forth the work of William Sewel, the Quaker Eusebius.]

John Gough : *A History of the People called Quakers*. 4 vols. Dublin. 1789. 8vo.

Samuel M. Janney : *History of the Religious Society of Friends from its rise to the year 1828*. 4 vols. Philadelphia. 1860. 8vo.

Frederick Storrs Turner : *The Quakers. A study Historical and Critical*. London. 1889. 8vo.

A mine of valuable material is contained in the work of Robert Barclay of Tottenham : *The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*. London. 1876. 8vo.

Joseph Smith's *Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books* (2 vols. London. 1867. 8vo. With *Supplement*, 1893) is an invaluable guide in dealing with early Quaker literature.

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